

INSIDE TODAY

WORLD NEWS

BODY SCANNERS



An image from a new security scanner is seen during a demonstration at Manchester Airport, Manchester, England, Thursday Jan. 7, 2010.

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SPORTS NEWS

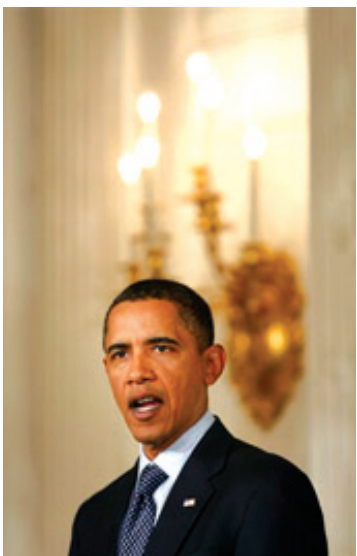
BOWL VS PLAYOFFS



This undated image provided by the BCS shows Bill Hancock, the new BCS executive director. Hancock said, Thursday, Jan. 7, 2010, that a major college football playoff would lead to more injuries, conflict with final exams, kill the bowl system and diminish the importance of the regular season.

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	Price of a barrel of petroleum
	US\$ 82.66
	↓0.52
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Obama says anti-terror 'buck' stops with him

President Barack Obama speaks about the attempted Christmas Day airline bombing, Thursday, Jan. 7, 2010, in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington.

Associated Press

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Stricter new smog limit would hit rural areas, too

DINA CAPIELLO
Associated Press Writer
WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday proposed stricter health standards for smog, replacing a Bush-era limit that ran counter to scientific recommendations.

Hundreds of communities far from congested highways and belching smokestacks could soon join big cities and industrial corridors in violation of stricter limits on lung-damaging smog. Costs of compliance could be in the tens of billions of dollars, but the government said the rules would save other billions — as well as lives — in the long run.

Continued on Page 4



In this April 28, 2009 file photo, smog covers downtown Los Angeles. The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday proposed stricter health standards for smog, replacing a Bush-era limit that ran counter to scientific recommendations.

Associated Press

Cold grips nation as crash in snowy Ohio kills 4



Busses are encrusted in ice and snow at the back lot of a bowling alley in the Omaha, Neb., suburb of Elkhorn, where a fire was being put out, Thursday, Jan. 7, 2010. A winter storm with bitter cold temperatures and blowing winds is traveling through the region.

Associated Press

By MEGHAN BARR
JAMES MacPHERSON
Associated Press Writer

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Steadily falling snow blanketed the Midwest on Thursday, part of a vicious cold snap engulfing much of the nation, and a tractor-trailer spun out of control on snow-slick roads in Ohio, killing four people and injuring seven.

The tractor-trailer jackknifed on Interstate 70, crossed the highway median and swerved into oncoming traffic, colliding with a small bus transporting adult disabled passengers, the Ohio Highway Patrol said.

The driver of the 17-passenger bus was among those killed, said Sgt. Raymond Durant.

Continued on Page 6



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Obama says anti-terror responsibility is his

BEN FELLER,

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) —

President Barack Obama declared Thursday he is responsible for U.S. security and suggested he would not fire anyone for the Christmas Day attack on a Detroit-bound airliner. Security lapses that led to the near-disaster were not the fault of a single individual or agency, he said, vowing they would be corrected.

Obama did not tell intelligence officials to change what they are doing. Instead, he told them to just do it better, and faster.

He left it to them to figure out how.

He said anew that the government had the information that might have prevented the botched attack but failed to piece it together. He announced about a dozen changes designed to fix that, including new terror watch list guidelines, wider and quicker distribution of intelligence reports, stronger analysis of those reports, international partnerships and an interagency effort to develop next-generation airport screening technologies.

While Obama promised improved security, his solutions were laced with bureaucratic reshuffling.

Americans might be surprised



White House Counterterrorism adviser John Brennan, center, accompanied by White House press secretary Robert Gibbs, left, and Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, briefs reporters in the White House briefing room in Washington, Thursday, Jan. 7, 2010, about an alleged terrorist attempt to destroy a Detroit-bound U.S. airliner.

that the government was not already taking some of the steps Obama ordered. For instance, he directed the intelligence community to begin assigning direct responsibility for following up leads on high-priority threats. Obama himself hinted at the difficulties of improving intelligence and security against a terrorist network that devises new methods as fast or faster than the U.S. can come up with defenses.

“There is, of course, no foolproof solution,” he said. “We have to stay one step ahead of a nimble adversary.” He spoke from the White House, his remarks delayed twice as officials scrambled to declassify a six-page summary of a report he’d ordered from top officials on the security failures. That summary was released immediately after he spoke.

“When the system fails, it is my responsibility,” Obama

said.

The White House is anxious to resolve and move beyond the issue, which threatens to damage the president politically in a congressional election year and distract further from his agenda.

Republicans have pointed to the attack and Obama’s handling of it to criticize him as weak on national security — a perennial election-season charge against Democrats that has sometimes been effective in the past.

Clearly aware of the potential political fallout, Obama struck a tough tone toward the anti-terror fight, taking the rare step — for him — of calling it a “war.”

“We are at war, we are at war against al-Qaida,” he said. “We will do whatever it takes to defeat them.”

The unclassified summary stated that U.S. intelligence officials had received unspecified “discrete pieces of intelligence” to identify 23-year-old Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab as an al-Qaida operative and keep him off the flight from Amsterdam. Officials received fragments of information as early as October, according to the report.

Although intelligence officials knew that an al-Qaida

operative in Yemen posed a threat to U.S. security, they did not increase their focus on that threat and did not pull together fragments of data needed to foil the scheme, said the summary.

Still, the report concludes, “The watch listing system is not broken” and a reorganization of the nation’s counterterrorism system is not necessary. The report, instead, calls for strengthening the process used to add suspected terrorists to watch lists.

According to the report, “a series of human errors” occurred, including a delay in the dissemination of a completed intelligence report and the failure of CIA and counterterrorism officers to search all available databases for information that could have been tied to Abdulmutallab.

Unlike the run-up to the 2001 terrorist attacks, intelligence officials did share information. But authorities didn’t understand what they had.

The president seemed to settle the question of whom to blame by declaring that blame was shared by many.

“Now at this stage in the review process, it appears that this incident was not the fault of a single individual or organization, but rather a systemic failure across organizations and agencies,” he said.

He ordered all involved agency heads to set up internal accountability units to review efforts to make changes. “We will measure progress,” he said.

Underscoring Obama’s assertion that no one individual was responsible for failing to thwart the attack, the administration’s report noted that Abdulmutallab’s name was misspelled in one instance, leading the State Department to conclude he did not have a valid U.S. visa — when in fact he did. Even so, the report said steps to revoke his visa could have occurred only if other intelligence information had been coordinated and he was placed on a more restrictive watch list. □

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Suspect in St. Louis plant shooting believed dead

JIM SALTER

Associated Press Writer

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A disgruntled worker embroiled in a pension dispute with his company walked into the plant and opened fire Thursday, killing three people and wounding five before apparently killing himself. The shooting spree at ABB Group's plant sent frightened co-workers scrambling into closets and to the snow-covered roof for safety. Fire officials identified the shooter as 51-year-old Timothy Hendron of Webster Groves. Police would not release his name but said a man believed to be the gunman was found

dead inside the plant from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.

"We're very confident that this is the shooter," Police Chief Dan Isom said at a news conference.

The shooting began at 6:30 a.m. at the plant where the Swiss-owned company makes electrical transformers. Police spent hours inside the sprawling plant searching for the gunman and additional victims.

The motive for the shooting wasn't immediately known. But in 2006, Hendron and other ABB workers sued the company over retirement

losses. The federal lawsuit accused ABB and its pension-review committee of causing their retirement accounts to include investment options with "unreasonable and excessive" — and undisclosed — fees and expenses. The suit went to trial Tuesday in Kansas City.

The shooting began during a shift change at the plant, which employs about 270 people. Forty to 50 employees were likely in the building at the time, police Capt. Sam Dotson said.

It wasn't clear how many shots were fired, but authorities said employees scurried to find



Police cars are seen at the scene of a shooting where a gunman with an assault rifle walked into the ABB Power Plant Thursday, Jan. 7, 2010, in St. Louis.

Associated Press

refuge from the bullets. "Many of them sought safety on the roof, in boilers and broom closets," Dotson said. Names of the victims were not immediately released. Police said three of the injured were in critical condition and two were in fair condition.

Fire Chief Dennis Jenkerson said firefighters and

paramedics were standing by in case there were additional injuries, either from the shooting itself or from seeking refuge on the roof in bitter cold.

"It's cold, and shock sets in, hypothermia," Jenkerson said. "It doesn't sound good."

Dozens of emergency vehicles circled the sprawling plant. □

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson speaks during a news conference following her keynote speech at the second Governors' Global Climate Summit in Los Angeles, Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2009.

SMOG LIMIT

Continued from Front Page

More than 300 counties — mainly in southern California, the Northeast and Gulf Coast — already violate the current, looser requirements adopted two years ago by the Bush administration and will find it even harder to reduce smog-forming pollution enough to

comply with the law.

The new limits being considered by the Environmental Protection Agency could more than double the number of counties in violation and reach places like California's wine country in Napa Valley.

For the first time, counties in Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, the

Dakotas, Kansas, Minnesota and Iowa might be forced to find ways to clamp down on smog-forming emissions from industry and automobiles, or face government sanctions, most likely the loss of federal highway dollars.

The tighter standards, though costly to implement, will ultimately save billions in avoided emergency room visits, premature deaths, and

missed work and school days, the EPA said.

The proposal presents a range for the allowable concentration of ground-level ozone, the main ingredient in smog, from 60 parts per billion to 70 parts, as recommended by scientists during the Bush administration.

EPA plans to select a specific figure within that range by August. Counties and states will then have up to 20 years to meet the new limits, depending on how severely they are out of compliance. They will have to submit plans for meeting the new limits by end of 2013 or early 2014.

Former President George W. Bush personally intervened in the issue after hearing complaints from electric utilities and other affected industries. His EPA set a standard of 75 parts per billion, stricter than one adopted in 1997 but not as strict as what scientist said was needed to protect public health.

Some of those same industries reiterated their opposition Thursday to a stronger smog standard.

"We probably won't know for a couple of years just what utilities and other emissions

sources will be required to do in response to a tighter ozone standard," said John Kinsman, a senior director at the Edison Electric Institute, an industry trade group. "Utilities already have made substantial reductions in ozone-related emissions."

Environmentalists endorsed the new plan. "If EPA follows through, it will mean significantly cleaner air and better health protection," said Frank O'Donnell, president of the advocacy group Clean Air Watch.

EPA estimates meeting the new requirements will cost industry and motorists from \$19 billion to as much as \$90 billion a year by 2020. The Bush administration had put the cost of meeting its threshold at \$7.6 billion to \$8.5 billion a year.

The new regulations would mean more controls on large industrial facilities, plus regulating smaller facilities and sources. New federal regulations in the works to improve car and truck fuel economy and curb global warming pollution at large factories will also help communities meet any new standards, the EPA said. □

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Vehicles travel in white out conditions caused by blowing snow on Interstate 80 west of Omaha, Neb., Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2010. A storm system with sub-freezing temperatures and high winds is traveling through the Midwest

Associated Press

FRIGID WEATHER

Continued from Front Page

One person was in critical condition and six others were injured and taken to hospitals, he said. Six of the injured were on the bus, and the tractor-trailer driver was also injured. Durant said the bus was carrying 11 people at the time of the crash.

The accident occurred near Springfield in southwest Ohio, where a storm that stretched as far west as the Dakotas had dumped nearly 5 inches of snow by early evening, according to the National

Weather Service.

With the cold and icy, snow-covered roads responsible for at least 15 deaths this year, officials throughout the U.S. told people to stay home if they could.

Snowfall was heaviest in Minnesota and parts of South Dakota, where blowing winds piled up drifts too big for snowplow drivers to clear. Some parts of southwestern Minnesota received 8.5 inches of snow by Thursday morning.

In Illinois, six snowplows were involved in accidents,

most when other vehicles rear-ended the trucks. By Friday morning, parts of Wisconsin could see up to 12 inches of snow.

Snowflakes fell as far south as Alabama and Georgia on Thursday.

Frostbite-inducing temperatures gripped much of the nation, and schools in at least 10 states were closed, as were roads and government offices.

Nowhere was it colder than in Bismarck, N.D., where wind chills hit a frighteningly frigid 52 below zero.

"The air freezes your nostrils, your eyes water and your chest burns from breathing," said Jane Tetrault, of Burke County in northwestern North Dakota. "And that's just going from the house to your vehicle."

While North Dakotans get plenty of practice with bundling up, folks in other parts of the country were still learning the basics.

With temperatures on the Texas-Mexico border expected to near freezing Thursday night, officials in Laredo issued an advisory telling residents to "dress warmly and stay dry."

"Adults and children should wear: a hat, a scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth, mittens, water-resistant coat and shoes, and several layers of loose-fitting clothing," the city advised residents, who usually see near 70-degree weather in January.

Snow started falling at about 9 a.m. in the county where the Ohio crash occurred and caused several accidents throughout the day, said sheriff's dispatcher Vanessa Haley. The snow grew heavier at about 12:45 p.m., when dispatchers received reports of the accident, Haley said. The highway patrol said the crash is being investigated and would not say whether it was weather-related.

The bus was from the Creative Learning Workshop, which provides vocational services to adults with mental and developmental disabilities. The center is based in Warren, Ohio, and has locations across the state.

Phone calls to the center's director were not immediately returned Thursday. □



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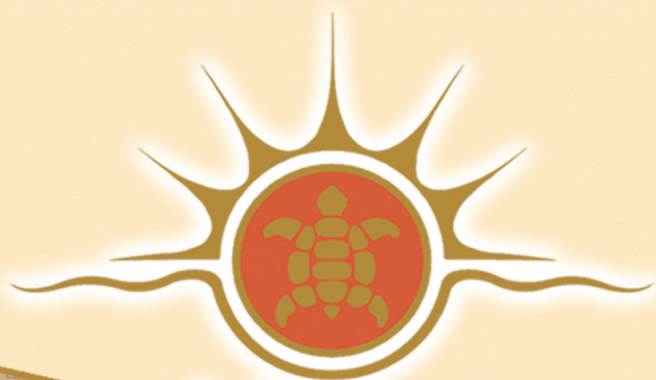




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Malaysian church fire-bombed amid 'Allah' dispute

EILEEN NG

Associated Press Writer

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Attackers fire-bombed a Malaysian church and tried to set another ablaze Friday amid a growing conflict over the use of the word “Allah” by non-Muslims, officials said.

The attacks sharply escalated tensions in the Muslim-majority country ahead of planned protests later Friday against a Kuala Lumpur High Court verdict which struck down a 3-year-old ban on non-Muslims using “Allah” in their literature.

The Dec. 31 court decision incensed many Muslims, who see it as a threat to their religion. Hateful comments and threats against Christians have been posted widely on the Internet, but this is the first time the controversy has turned destructive.

The ruling was on a petition by the Herald, the main publication of Malaysia's Roman Catholic Church, which uses the word Allah in its Malay-language edition.

Only the first floor office in the three-story Metro Tabernacle Church was destroyed in the pre-dawn blaze, said Kevin Ang, a spokesman for the Protestant church.

The worship areas on the upper two floors were undamaged and there were no injuries.

He quoted a witness as saying she saw three or four men on a motorcycle break the main glass front of the church and throw a gasoline bomb inside. The church occupies a corner plot in a row of shops in Desa Melawati, a suburb of Kuala Lumpur.

Separately, a Molotov cocktail was thrown into the compound of a Roman Catholic church before dawn Friday but caused no damage or injuries, said the Rev. Lawrence Andrew, the editor of the Herald.

Andrew said most churches have employed extra security guards amid the protest threats. “Most churches are taking precautions. They are aware it may just blow up,” he said.

The government has appealed the court verdict

and the High Court has suspended its decision's implementation until the appeal is heard.

Muslims argue that “Allah” is exclusive to Islam, and its use by Christians would confuse Muslims and tempt them to convert to Christianity.

Kuala Lumpur police Chief Mohamad Sabtu Osman told The Associated Press that it was premature to link the attacks on the churches to the protests over the lifting of the Allah ban.

“We are still investigating,” he said. He also urged Muslims not to participate in the planned protests, adding that police would be stationed at mosques to monitor the situation.

About 60 percent of Malaysia's 28 million people are Malay Muslims, while the rest are ethnic Chinese, Indians and indigenous tribes who follow Christianity, Hinduism and other religions.

The Malay-speaking indigenous tribespeople, living in remote states of Sabah and Sarawak, are the main readers of the Herald's Malay-language



Fire rescue personnel inspect damage after unidentified attackers set fire to a church in Malaysia, early Friday, Jan. 8, 2010. Officials say unidentified attackers set fire to a church in Malaysia amid a growing conflict in the country over the use of the word “Allah” by non-Muslims.

Associated Press

edition. Catholic officials say “Allah” is the only word they know for God.

Many Muslims in Malaysia have refused to accept the argument that “Allah” is an Arabic word that predates Islam, and that it is used by Christians in countries such as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Indonesia regularly in their worship.

The backlash against the court verdict has reinforced complaints by religious minorities in Malaysia that they face institutional

discrimination by the government.

On Thursday, the Malaysian judiciary's Web site was hacked and defaced with an apparent threat to Christians, The Star newspaper reported. The site, however, appeared to be normal on Friday.

The Star said the hacker, using the alias “Brainwash,” defaced the site with a banner saying: “Mess with the best, die like the rest” and “Allah only restricted to Muslim only.” □

EU nations divided on use of airport body scanners

SLOBODAN LEKIC

Associated Press Writer

BRUSSELS (AP) —

European nations were sharply divided Thursday over the need to install full-body scanners at European airports, with some EU members playing down the need for beefed-up security measures.

But the EU indicated it may force nations to comply.

After meeting in Brussels on Thursday, EU aviation security experts released a statement saying the EU Commission may issue a binding regulation on imaging technology to reinforce passenger security, while at the same time addressing the conditions for using such technology, such as privacy, data protection and health issues.

Italy on Thursday joined the United States, Britain and the Netherlands as nations that have announced plans to install the scanners following a Nigerian man's reported attempt to blow up a U.S. airliner flying from Amsterdam to Detroit on Christmas Day.

Washington is seeking enhanced security measures on all trans-Atlantic flights heading for the United States. That's a huge task, however, since European airports carry thousands of passengers on more than 800 flights a day across the lucrative North Atlantic route.

But as the EU aviation security experts met Thursday on the subject of scanners, Belgium's secretary of state for transport, Etienne Schouppe, described such enhanced measures as "excessive," saying security requirements at European airports are already "strict enough."

Spain, too, has expressed skepticism about the need for body scanners, and the German and French governments remain uncommitted.

German Interior Ministry spokesman Stefan Paris said EU rules on flight safety



Members of staff are seen demonstrating a new full body security scanner at Manchester Airport, Manchester, England, Thursday Jan. 7, 2010. Airline passengers bound for the United States faced a hodgepodge of security measures across Europe and airports did not appear to be following a U.S. request for increased screening of passengers from 14 countries.

Associated Press

need to be changed first before scanners can be used. A majority of EU member states need to agree for that to become an EU policy, he said.

Germany's position is that three conditions must be satisfied before the scanners could be deployed, Paris said. They are that the scans will increase security, that they are not a health hazard, and that the scans do not harm the individual's rights. Some EU countries have expressed concern that full-body scanners will be dangerous to staff member and passengers because of the radiation they emit.

However, the American College of Radiology issued a statement Wednesday noting that a passenger flying cross-country gets more radiation from the flight at high altitude than from either of the two types of scanners the U.S. Transportation Security Administration is using — presumably the same systems used in Europe.

One type, millimeter wave technology, used low-level radio waves — not radiation. The other technology uses very weak X-rays that give a radiation dose equivalent to flying for two minutes at 30,000 feet, the statement

says. That is so small it does not penetrate skin so it is considered generally safe for pregnant women, said the college's spokesman, Shawn Farley.

Neither technology type poses concern for any health risks "since they don't penetrate into the body," said James Hevezi, head of the radiology group's medical physics commission and physics chief at Cyberknife Center of Miami, a cancer treatment center.

Until now, the EU has allowed member states to decide on whether to use body scanners at airport checkpoints. In 2008, the EU suspended work regulating the use of body scanners after the European Parliament demanded a more in-depth study of their impact on health and privacy.

Amsterdam's Schipol Airport has 15 of the scanners and the Dutch have vowed to buy 60 more. They also are retrofitting the scanners with software that projects a stylized human figure onto the computer rather than the actual body image to address privacy concerns.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown is pressing for Britain to add more scanners than the few they have been testing at London's Heathrow

Airport, Europe's busiest, Manchester and other sites.

In Italy, Interior Minister Roberto Maroni said Thursday that full body scanners will be installed at Rome's Leonardo da Vinci airport, Milan's Malpensa airport and in Venice within the next three months. In all, about 10 scanners will be purchased.

"Security comes first before everything else for those who fly," Maroni said at a news conference.

The U.S. Transportation Security Administration, which uses 40 scanners throughout the United States, has announced plans to order dozens more.

Since the attempted terrorist attack on Dec. 25, the EU has been reevaluating its security regulations.

Aviation experts now must assess whether body scanners can fit into EU legislation, officials said.

"We have to reach agreement together with the (European) parliament and member states," Antonio Tajani, European vice president, said Thursday. "It's best to have a European solution than having individual member states deciding on their own."

Any significant action on

the issue would have to be taken by the European Commission, and approved by the EU parliament — a process that could take several months, even if all member states agreed on the need.

Schouppe agreed on the need for a united European Union approach.

"We must have a common position for all European Union members states so that there is a real transparency between measures taken on the European side and the U.S. side," he said in an interview with AP Television News.

"I have the feeling that (the Americans) are exaggerating. I don't know what kinds of controls they were using previously, but here, in Belgium and in the large majority of European airports, security controls were strict enough," Schouppe said.

Some experts have questioned the technical effectiveness of body scanners.

"I'm struggling to discover the logic for adopting the scanner technology," said Simon Davies, director of Privacy International, an independent watchdog on surveillance issues.

"Any security expert knows this is a red herring, a diversion from the real issue," he said. "The biggest failure in this case was a failure of intelligence. That's the Achilles heel of an effective counterterrorism strategy." U.S. officials say a Nigerian man, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, tried to destroy a Northwest Airlines flight from Amsterdam to Detroit on Christmas Day by injecting chemicals into a package of pentrite explosive concealed in his underwear. He failed to ignite the explosive. Abdulmutallab, 23, was indicted Wednesday on charges including attempted murder and trying to use a weapon of mass destruction to kill nearly 300 people. □

Official: Jamaica to take in radical Muslim cleric

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) — A Jamaica-born Muslim cleric who has called for killing Americans, Hindus and Jews has not committed any crimes in his native country and the Caribbean island will take him in, the foreign affairs minister said Thursday.

It is unclear when Sheik Abdullah el-Faisal might arrive in Jamaica, where he lived before departing for Africa in early 2009 on a Jamaican passport, Minister Kenneth Baugh told Nationwide News Network radio.

He did not know what route el-Faisal would take to Jamaica.

“As far as monitoring him, that will be left to the Ministry of National Security who have their program in place to maintain surveillance,” said Baugh, without revealing specifics.

Kenya deported El-Faisal to Gambia on Thursday after several countries, including the United States, denied him a transit visa. Kenya’s immigration minister said Gambian authorities have agreed to help el-Faisal find his way home.

Security agents will monitor el-Faisal’s activities in Jamaica because of his history of calling for violence in other nations, according to Glenmore Hinds, Jamaica’s assistant police chief. He would not disclose details, citing security protocols.

“We are working closely with our international partners on this subject,” Hinds said during the same radio program.

The permanent secretary of Jamaica’s Security Ministry, Richard Reese, referred security questions to police.

Gilbert Scott, former permanent secretary of the security ministry, said agents closely monitored el-Faisal during his time on the Caribbean island in 2007.

El-Faisal was born Trevor William Forrest in rural St. James parish and immigrated to Britain in the early 1980s. He was deported to Jamaica in May 2007 after serving time in a British prison for urging the killing of several religious groups.

El-Faisal once led a London mosque attended by convicted terrorists, and Britain has said that his teachings heavily influenced one of the bombers in the 2005 transport network attacks in London that killed 52 people.

Mustafa Muhammad, the head of Jamaica’s Muslim community, has said he is extremely concerned about el-Faisal’s return and plans to meet with community leaders.

He said Jamaica’s poverty and lack of security might make it easy for people to infiltrate their community. □



File - This Oct. 2008 file photo by Muhammad ud-Deen shows Imam Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen. Yemen’s deputy prime minister Rashad al-Alimi says Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian accused of trying to blow up a U.S. passenger jet on Christmas, may have met in Yemen with Anwar al-Awlaki, a radical American-Yemeni cleric linked to al-Qaida and the alleged Fort Hood shooter U.S. Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan.

Associated Press

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FILE- This May 21, 2006 file photo, shows actor Charlie Sheen as he arrives for the screening of the film 'Platoon,' at the 59th International film festival in Cannes, southern France. A Colorado judge has ruled, Thursday, Jan. 7, 2010, that Sheen must appear in person at a hearing in Aspen on allegations he threatened his wife with a knife.

(AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth, File)

Sheen ordered to appear in person at Aspen hearing

ASPEN, Colo. — A Colorado judge has ruled that actor Charlie Sheen must appear in person at a hearing in Aspen on allegations he threatened his wife with a knife.

Pitkin County Chief Deputy District Attorney Arnold Mordkin said Thursday the judge denied a request by the actor's lawyers that he should be allowed to participate on Feb. 8 by phone.

Mordkin says prosecutors did not take a position on the request.

Sheen was arrested in Aspen on Christmas Day on suspicion of felony menacing, domestic violence and other charges. Brooke Sheen told police he put a knife to her throat and threatened to kill her.

Sheen denies threatening his wife with a knife. Attorneys for both husband and wife say they want to try to reconcile. The 44-year-old actor stars in "Two and a Half Men" on CBS.

'American Idol' thinks young, edgy in ninth season

By LYNN ELBER,
AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES — "American Idol" was the colossus that dominated television in the new century's first decade, generating top ratings, a heady share of buzz and a handful of bankable stars including Kelly Clarkson, Carrie Underwood and Jennifer Hudson.

"THIS is 'American Idol,'" host Ryan Seacrest first intoned in 2002, and the singing contest that was a summer surprise turned into an annual visitor with staying power.

Whether it can retain its status this year, let alone through the second decade, is a crucial question for its home base, Fox, as well as the network's competitors and the seemingly bottomless well of aspiring singers who see it as a shortcut to discovery.

It's a challenge for a series that, entering its ninth season Tuesday (8 p.m. EST), is undergoing its biggest shake-up yet with Ellen DeGeneres taking the place of Paula Abdul on the judging panel

that includes Simon Cowell, Randy Jackson and, back for her sophomore turn, Kara DioGuardi.

Can "Idol" hang on as the No. 1 series, a spot it's held for five years among all viewers and for six years among 18-to-49 year olds, a demographic much favored by advertisers? Yes, said industry analyst Shari Anne Brill — for now.

"It will remain the top-rated show through this year," said Brill of Carat USA. After that, she said, it's a guessing game, especially if uber-judge Cowell decides to exit after this season and "Idol" is deprived of his sharp bite (or at least loud bark).

The show's producers and Fox pay due respect to the judging panel but say what counts most are the "kids," their favored term for the mostly 20-something contestants angling for a record contract and career, such as last year's winner Kris Allen and runner-up Adam Lambert.

In focus groups with viewers, it's about contestants that provoke the most emotion,

said Fox executive Preston Beckman, adding, "They want to root for someone and see someone win."

DeGeneres brings "something unique and will be the nurturing person on the show and create an interesting dynamic with Simon. But at the end of the day, it's not on her shoulders to carry the show," he said.

Cecile Frot-Coutaz, CEO of series producer FremantleMedia North America and an "Idol" executive producer, said she's nothing but bullish on the future.

"Thank God it's an event, like a sporting event, so it rises above the crowd," she said.

Its ad rates are a cut above, too: A 30-second commercial on "Idol" cost around \$500,000 last season and hit more than \$600,000 for the finale, according to the ad-buying firm Initiative, while other top 10 shows were getting closer to about \$250,000 for half-minute spots.

A promising sign for "Idol" is the overall broadcast TV picture. □



In this undated publicity image released by Fox, new 'American Idol,' judge Ellen DeGeneres is shown.

(AP Photo/Fox, Michael Becker)

Actor Gary Coleman released from hospital



FILE - In this Feb. 26, 2008 file photo, actor Gary Coleman appears on the the NBC 'Today' program in New York.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew, file)

LOS ANGELES — Gary Coleman's agent says the "Diff'rent Strokes" actor is fine after a slight seizure sent him to a Los Angeles hospital for less than a day.

Agent Robert Malcolm says the 41-year-old Coleman was released from a Los Angeles hospital Wednesday night. He was taken there by ambulance earlier in the day after feeling faint and vomiting at a hotel. Malcolm says he returned to the hotel after his release and planned to go home later Thursday.

Coleman, who has had two failed kidney transplants, was in town to meet with producers of his latest film, "Midgets vs. Mascots." Coleman says he wants them to remove a brief scene of frontal nudity that he did not authorize. □



FILE - In this Feb. 6, 2009 file photo, Cassandra Wilson arrives at the MusiCares Person of the Year Tribute honoring Neil Diamond in Los Angeles.

(AP Photo/Chris Pizzello, file)

By SHELIA BYRD,
Associated Press Writer

JACKSON, Miss. — Jazz vocalist Cassandra Wilson can easily explain why the Mississippi Blues Trail would embrace jazz artists.

"Blues is an essential component of jazz. It's like one of the building blocks. It's what we use in order to navigate changes. You always have to keep close ties to that original sound and feeling," Wilson said Thursday after

Cassandra Wilson honored with blues marker

a blues marker was unveiled in her honor at a school she attended as a child.

The ceremony drew a crowd of some 200 students, friends and other musicians, including singer Dorothy Moore and bluesman Bobby Rush.

Wilson, a two-time Grammy Award-winner whose eclectic repertoire has included covers of blues tunes, absorbed music from her earliest years. Her father, Herman Fowlkes Jr., was a bassist who played with blues harmonica icon Sonny Boy Williamson II.

Wilson chose the site for the marker. The Brinkley Middle School is located in what is now an economically depressed area of Jackson, but Wilson said it's where she got her start.

"It's where I learned about music. It's where I played and went to school and it's such a wonderful neighborhood," Wilson said.

The marker is the 100th on the trail, created as part of a

project designed to bolster the state's blues tourism industry. The trail will stretch from Memphis Minnie's grave in Walls, near the Tennessee border, to Farish Street in downtown Jackson, a historic black business district and home of the Alamo Theatre where many famous black entertainers have performed. That's where Moore's marker was placed in 2008.

Scott Baretta, a researcher for the trail, said Wilson's marker will illustrate how jazz and blues have intersected.

"Jazz musicians have always played blues, but usually when they talk about blues, they're referring to chord changes for a particular style of song and not to songs very closely associated with blues," Baretta said. "What's unique about her is that she covers songs by Delta blues artists, such as Robert Johnson and Son House, and that music generally wouldn't be found in the repertoire of jazz artists."

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Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange shortly after the opening bell on the last trading session of 2009 in New York, December 31, 2009.

REUTERS/Mike Segar

Stocks notch modest gains ahead of employment data

By TIM PARADIS
and IEVA M. AUGSTUMS,
AP Business Writers

NEW YORK — Stocks ended mostly higher Thursday as investors placed modest bets ahead of the government's monthly employment report.

The gain in most stocks came as investors traded cautiously before Friday's report on December employment. Analysts are expecting modest job losses. The government reported a slight rise in weekly claims for unemployment benefits Thursday, though the increase was less than expected. The Labor Department said initial claims rose by 1,000 last week.

Stuart Schweitzer, global markets strategist at J.P. Morgan's Private Bank in New York, said markets are in a holding pattern as traders look to the jobs report.

"Everyone is waiting for the fireworks," he said.

Schweitzer predicts that traders would take in stride a modest loss or gain in jobs, but that any number well outside expectations could cause worries about a slide in the economy or, conversely, that rapid growth would risk triggering inflation.

"It's a case of not too hot and not too cold but somewhere in the middle," he said. Upbeat December retail sales reports and increased forecasts lifted some retailers. Shoppers spent a little more over the holiday season, though consumer spending is expected to be weak amid continuing high unemployment and tight credit. Sears Holdings Corp., which operates Kmart and Sears, Roebuck and Co., eked out a small gain and offered fourth-quarter guidance that was sharply above Wall Street estimates. Others, including Macy's Inc. and Limited Brands Inc., raised their profit forecasts. The reports come as investors hunt for more evidence of economic strength to sustain a 10-month bull run in the stock market. Trading in recent days has offered few clues about the direction of the markets in 2010 as investors hold back ahead of the jobs report. □

Job market shows signs of healing

By Lucia Mutikani

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — The number of U.S. workers filing new jobless claims edged up by a slim 1,000 last week and a gauge of underlying labor market trends hit a nearly 16-month low, evidence the job market continues to heal.

The Labor Department said on Thursday initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose to 434,000 after declining for two consecutive weeks. Wall Street analysts had expected claims to hit 447,000.

However the four-week moving average, considered a better measure of underlying labor market trends, dropped to the lowest level since mid-September 2008. The average fell for the 18th straight week to 450,250 -- around the level economists associate with labor market stability.

"The persistent downtrend evident in these data is encouraging and corroborates our view that the employment situation is turning," said Michelle Girard, a senior economist at RBS in Greenwich, Connecticut.

The report came a day before the release of the government's employment report for December, which a Reuters survey predicted would show no jobs were lost, the best result since the economy tumbled into recession two years ago.

James Bullard, president of the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank told university students in China the U.S. labor market was improving and the economy was close to the point where the unemployment rate would start to fall.

According to the Reuters



People gather while awaiting the start of seminars for job seekers at an employment center in San Francisco, California November 20, 2009.

REUTERS/Robert Galbraith

survey, the jobless rate likely rose to 10.1 percent last month from 10 percent in November. The relatively bullish weekly claims report helped to lift the U.S. dollar against the euro and the yen. Dollar strength and weak commodity prices took some edge off U.S. stocks, while prices for U.S. government debt rose.

Investors were also eyeing reports on December sales from U.S. retailers.

Early reports from Sears Holdings Corp (SHLD.O), Costco Wholesale Corp (COST.O), Macy's Inc (M.N) and others showed sales increasing, suggesting consumer spending was helping give the economy a lift.

STRONG HEALING SIGNS

The pace of layoffs has slowed sharply in recent months as the economy resumed growth after its worst slump in 70 years.

The state of the job market is among the key factors that will determine the timing of the Federal Reserve's first interest rate increase since

cutting benchmark overnight borrowing costs to near zero in December 2008. The central bank has vowed to keep them low for an extended period.

"Jobless claims do suggest that employment could be set to grow again, and we continue to expect that tomorrow's employment report will show a 40,000 increase in nonfarm payroll employment in December," said Abiel Reinhart, an economist at JPMorgan in New York.

Moderating job losses are helping consumers to keep up with their loan repayments. The American Bankers Association said consumer loan delinquencies dropped in seven categories in the third quarter. It was the first time since 2007 that so many loan categories experienced declines in late payments.

The insured unemployment rate, which measures the percentage of the insured labor force that is jobless, fell to 3.6 percent in the week ended December 26, the lowest since January last year, from 3.8 percent, the Labor Department said. □

SPORTS

Aruba TODAY

NBA Roundup

Clippers get rare win over Lakers

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The resurgent Clippers held off the Lakers to win 102-91 on Wednesday, snapping a nine-game losing streak in the NBA's battle of Los Angeles. Baron Davis scored 25 points and Chris Kaman added 21 points and 14 rebounds for the Clippers, who beat the defending NBA champions for the first time since 2006-07.

The Clippers have won five

Japan, MLB discuss global series

TOKYO (AP) — The champions of U.S. Major League Baseball could face the champions of Japanese professional baseball in a regular Global World Series under a plan being discussed by the two countries.

In meetings with Japanese commissioner Ryozo Kato in Milwaukee, MLB commissioner Bud Selig proposed that the Japanese and U.S. champions play each other, the Nikkansports newspaper reported Thursday.

"I was surprised, Mr. Selig said he wants to realize the plan before his tenure ends," Kato told the Nikkansports. Selig is set to retire in 2012. When he took office in 2008, Kato, a former Japanese ambassador to the United States, said one of his goals was an international series between the world's two biggest baseball nations. Japan is the two-time defending champion of the World Baseball Classic, a national-teams tournament which involves professional players from leagues around the world. □



Boston Celtics guard Rajon Rondo, right, makes buzzer-beating layup at the end of regulation against Miami Heat guard Mario Chalmers (6) to send the game into overtime during an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2010 in Miami. Rondo scored 25 points, as the Celtics defeated the Heat 112-106 in overtime.

Associated Press

straight at home for the first time since a six-game winning streak in that same season.

Kobe Bryant scored 33 points as the Lakers' four-game winning streak ended.

In Phoenix, the hosts were 16 points up, then 16 points down, before coming back to down Houston.

Steve Nash scored 26 points and had 12 assists and Amare Stoudemire added 25 points and 11 rebounds for the Suns. It was a furious game marked by a series of remarkable runs. It was the second time this season the Suns had rallied from a 16-point deficit in back-to-back games.

Aaron Brooks topped Houston with a career-high 34 points. Raptors 108, Magic 103

In Orlando, Florida, Toronto almost blew an 18-point fourth quarter lead before holding on to beat Orlando, further slicing the Magic's lead in the NBA Southeast Division.

Andrea Bargnani and Chris Bosh had 18 points apiece as Toronto won for the seventh time in eight games, getting back to a squared 18-18 record.

Toronto's lead was trimmed to two with 43 seconds remaining, but J.J. Redick missed a 3-pointer in the final seconds that could have tied

the score.

Redick finished with 22 points for the Magic, who have lost three straight for the first time this season. Their lead in the Southeast was cut to just 1-1/2 games over Atlanta.

In Miami, Boston came from 11 points down in the fourth quarter to tie the game in a frantic finish to regulation, then beat Miami in overtime.

Dwayne Wade had his best game of the season for the Heat and seemingly gave them victory with a steal and dunk with 0.6 seconds left. But Boston's Rajon Rondo sank a buzzer-beating layup after catching Paul Pierce's lob.

Rondo scored 25 points, and Ray Allen 22 points for Boston, which maintains a fractional advantage over Cleveland in the scrap over the Eastern Conference lead. Cavaliers 121, Wizards 98

In Cleveland, LeBron James piled up 23 points, eight assists and seven rebounds in just three quarters as Cleveland rolled to a comfortable win over Washington, absent troubled guard Gilbert Arenas.

Shaquille O'Neal added 17 points in 17 minutes as the Cavs posted a season-high for points and won for the 13th time in 15 games.

The Wizards played for the first time this season without Arenas, who was suspended indefinitely by the NBA a few hours before the game. He is being investigated by police after bringing unloaded guns to Washington's locker room. Antawn Jamison scored 26 points to lead the Wizards. In Salt Lake City, Utah overcame the absence of Deron Williams to beat Memphis. Williams sat out with a sprained right wrist. He warmed up prior to the game, but was only able to shoot

with his left hand.

C.J. Miles scored a season-high 24 points and Carlos Boozer added 20 for the Jazz. Sam Young matched his career-high scoring 22 points for Memphis, which lost its first game in four.

In San Antonio, Tony Parker and Roger Mason Jr. keyed a decisive run early in the fourth quarter as San Antonio sent Detroit to its 11th consecutive loss.

A missed free throw in the final quarter would have given Detroit the lead, but San Antonio went on a 35-15 run from then on to put the game away.

Parker led San Antonio with 23 points, while the Pistons were led by Richard Hamilton's 29 points. In Oklahoma City, New Orleans moved above .500 for the first time this season by beating Oklahoma City.

David West scored 19 points and Chris Paul had 14 points and 13 assists as the Hornets improved their miserable road record with victory at an arena they called home for two seasons following Hurricane Katrina.

Paul maneuvered into the lane and rolled in a layup with 11 seconds left to put New Orleans up 95-92.

Russell Westbrook missed an off-balance 3-pointer that would've tied it in the closing seconds.

In other NBA games it was, Atlanta 119, New Jersey 89; Cleveland 121, Washington 98; Toronto 108, Orlando 103; Boston 112, Miami 106, OT; Golden State 107, Minnesota 101; New Orleans 97, Oklahoma City 92; San Antonio 112, Detroit 92; Utah 117, Memphis 94; Phoenix 118, Houston 110; and L.A. Clippers 102, L.A. Lakers 91. □

Federer, Nadal reach semifinals at Qatar Open

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Roger Federer overcame Ernests Gulbis' strong serve to reach the Qatar Open semifinals Thursday with a 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 victory.

Federer broke twice to take the first set with ease, but then hit two shots long in the 10th game of the second to let the Latvian level the match.

The players traded breaks to make it 3-3 in the third, before Federer capitalized on Gulbis' errors in the 10th game to seal the win.

The 90th-ranked Gulbis finished with 13 aces — seven of them in the second set — and did enough to impress the Swiss No. 1 in their first meeting.

"I know that Gulbis is the player with the most potential right now," Federer said. "Unfortunately, he doesn't

have the ranking he deserves. I took him very seriously. I wasn't surprised by how he played today."

In the semifinals on Friday, Federer will play the winner between Nikolay Davydenko of Russia and Ivo Karlovic of Croatia.

Earlier Thursday, Rafael Nadal reached the semifinals after Belgian opponent Steve Darcis retired with a back problem while trailing 6-1, 2-0. Nadal, a two-time quarterfinalist in Doha, will next meet Viktor Troicki of Serbia, who beat Lukasz Kubot of Poland 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (1).

"I am playing well," Nadal said. "There was more confirmation that I am hitting the ball well. I started well and served good. I am in the semifinals without losing a set. I am happy with that."

Nadal broke Darcis three times in the first set, and then again in the second game of the final set.

"I wish him a fast recovery," Nadal said. "I hope he is fit for the Australian Open."

Wawrinka advances to Chennai Open quarterfinals CHENNAI, India (AP) — Third-seeded Stanislas Wawrinka of Switzerland advanced to the quarterfinals of the \$400,000 Chennai Open with a 6-3, 6-4 win over American Michael Russel at the Nungabakkam Tennis Stadium on Thursday.

Wawrinka, who lost to a qualifier in the first round of the same tournament last year, defeated Russel in 91 minutes to set up a quarterfinal clash with seventh seed Michael Berrer of Germany, who ousted Stephane Robert of



Nikolay Davydenko of Russia returns the ball to Ivo Karlovic of Croatia during the Qatar ATP Open Tennis tournament in Doha, Qatar, Thursday, Jan. 7, 2010.

Associated Press

France 7-6 (9-7), 6-3.

In an earlier match, Lukas Lacko defeated American Robby Ginepri, who beat top-seeded Robin Soderling in the first round. The Slovakian defeated Ginepri 7-6 (7-3), 6-4 in just over 90 minutes. Lacko will next play fifth-seeded Dudi Sela of Israel in the quarterfinals. Sela overcame Kevin Kim of USA 7-6 (3), 6-2. Wawrinka broke Russel in the seventh game to go up 4-3 before going on

to wrap up the set at 6-3. In the second, he led 3-1 with a break in the fourth game but Russel broke him back in the next and then held the sixth game to level the scores. Two unforced errors, however, gave Wawrinka another break before he went on to win the set and the match.

"It was a tough match, no doubt," Wawrinka said. "He was playing really well, but I am just happy to have come through in straight sets." □



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BCS chief: System is in schools' best interest



An exterior view of the Rose Bowl Stadium is seen in Pasadena, Calif., Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2010. Texas plays Alabama in the BCS Championship NCAA college football game on Thursday.

Associated Press

By RALPH D. RUSSO

AP College Football Writer

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — The new BCS executive director officially began his tenure Thursday by saying the often-criticized postseason represents a consensus among the 120 schools that play major college football.

Bill Hancock said a playoff at college football's highest level would lead to more injuries, conflict with final exams, kill the bowl system and diminish the importance of the regular season.

"I know this is not completely popular, but I believe in it," Hancock told reporters Thursday at the Football Writers Association of America awards breakfast. "I believe it is in the best interest of the universities."

"College football has never been better and I believe the BCS is part of that."

Hancock, a longtime administrator in college athletics, was hired by the conference commissioners in November to be a full-time point person for the Bowl Championship Series. During the first 12 years of the BCS, the position of coordinator rotated among conference commissioners on a two-year basis.

Hancock now assumes those duties.

The Bowl Championship Series was implemented in 1998 to match the two top-ranked teams in major college football at the end of the season and help create matchups for the four other marquee bowl games — the Fiesta, Sugar, Orange and Rose.

No. 1 Alabama and No. 2 Texas were set to play in the BCS national championship Thursday night at the Rose Bowl.

Hancock said the fact that other lower levels of college football use playoffs to decide their champions doesn't mean it would work in the Football Bowl Subdivision. The second-tier of Division I football, the Championship Subdivision, has a 16-team playoff with all but the final played at home sites.

"It works at that level, I can't deny it, but if you look attendance for those games, only Montana had decent attendance," he said. "Many teams didn't draw as well as they did in the regular season."

Hancock said there has been no discussion about adding a fifth bowl into the BCS

mix. He said the commissioners and bowls are pleased with the double-hosting model, in which the championship game is played about a week after the other four bowls at one of those sites.

"But I suspect it will be one of the items on our list of topics," he said.

It has been speculated that the Cotton Bowl, now played in the new \$1.2 billion Dallas Cowboys Stadium, would again make a pitch to be included in the BCS.

"The fact is what we have right now works," Hancock said. "Who would you ask not to be a part of this?"

No changes are expected to the system for the next four years, despite congressional hearings and a new pro-playoff ad campaign.

The BCS begins a new four-year TV deal with Disney-owned ESPN next season, and each of its current bowl partners also start new four-year contracts in the 2010 season.

The BCS is in the middle of a four-year cycle it will use to evaluate which conferences receive automatic bids. The champions of the Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-10, ACC and SEC currently get automatic bids to BCS games.

The BCS uses three criteria, which judge the strength of the teams in the conferences from top to bottom, to determine which leagues receive automatic bids.


Hancock said the number of automatic bids could go up for the 2012 season if another conference qualifies under the BCS standards.

The Mountain West Conference doesn't have an automatic bid but has had its champion earn a BCS berth three times since the 2004 season, including this season with TCU. The Western Athletic Conference also has had three teams, including Boise State twice, reach the BCS.

But both leagues would like to secure automatic bids and some BCS critics have questioned whether the process for earning an automatic bid is truly objective.

Hancock said the BCS has talked about making that process more transparent.

"I think there is some sense now that it is time to be a little bit more open about that," he said. "It's all objective, based on the data." □



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Sharks reclaim NHL lead, beat Blues 2-1

SAN JOSE, California (AP) — The San Jose Sharks reclaimed a share of the NHL lead with a 2-1 overtime win over the St. Louis Blues on Wednesday.

Dany Heatley scored on a breakaway four minutes into overtime to give San Jose its ninth victory in 10 games, drawing level with Chicago on 63 points.

Andy McDonald gave St. Louis the lead, but Patrick Marleau tied it on a power-play goal with 7:09 left in regulation. Sharks goalie and Evgeni Nabokov made 28 saves.

The Blues lost their sixth straight and second since interim coach Davis Payne took over from the fired Andy Murray.

Sabres 5, Lightning 3

In Buffalo, New York, Buffalo scored three times in just over two minutes at the start of the game to set up a win over Tampa Bay, boosting its lead in the NHL's Northeast Division.

Tyler Myers, Jochen Hecht and Clarke MacArthur gave Buffalo its quickest ever start to a game at 3-0 after 2:11, and Ryan Miller made 36 saves in his 300th NHL game to hold off Tampa Bay's comeback attempt.

Drew Stafford and Jason Pominville also scored to help the Sabres win a fifth straight game, their longest winning streak for two seasons.

The Lightning's goals came from Martin St. Louis, Victor Hedman and Vincent Lecavalier.

Wild 4, Flames 1

In St. Paul, Minnesota, Eric Belanger scored twice, and Kyle Brodziak and Cal Clutterbuck added goals as Minnesota downed Calgary.

Niklas Backstrom made 25 saves for Minnesota, which snapped a four-game losing skid and ended Calgary's winning streak at five.

Olli Jokinen scored for the Flames.

Islanders 3, Avalanche 2

In Denver, Kyle Okposo scored on a 3-on-1 rush with 3:17 remaining as New York beat Colorado in the lone meeting between the teams this season.

Rob Schremp and Jon Sim also scored for the Islanders. Chris Stewart and Matt Hendricks and scored for Colorado.

Rangers 5, Stars 2

In New York, Sean Avery exacted revenge on Dallas a year after they dumped him, scoring a goal and setting up three others for New York to match his career best with four points.

Avery's stay with the Stars lasted only 23 games into a four-year, \$15.5 million contract that he signed before last season.

He was suspended by the NHL in December after making crude comments about his former girlfriends dating other players. He never again played for the Stars, who waived him in February.

Marian Gaborik scored his NHL-leading 28th goal, and Ales Kotalik, Chris Drury and Ryan Callahan also scored for New York.

Dallas got goals from Brad Richards and Jere Lehtinen.

Flyers 6, Maple Leafs 2

In Philadelphia, Danny Briere scored two goals to reach the 500-point plateau as Philadelphia routed Toronto in a fight-filled game.

Danny Syvret, Dan Carcillo, Mike Richards and James van Riemsdyk also scored for the Flyers.

Nikolai Kulemin and Alexei Ponikarovsky netted for Toronto



San Jose Sharks left wing Dany Heatley (15), from Germany, celebrates after scoring against St. Louis Blues goalie Chris Mason (50) in the overtime period of an NHL hockey game in San Jose, Calif., Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2010. The Sharks won 2-1 in overtime.

Associated Press

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Mayweather blames 'megabout' collapse on Pacquiao

GREG BEACHAM
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Floyd Mayweather Jr. blamed Manny Pacquiao for the collapse of their prospective bout on Thursday, claiming the Filipino boxer refuses to accept a reasonable compromise on drug testing concerns.

Mayweather also says he's still ready to sign a deal for the fight, which was slated for March 13 at the MGM Grand Garden in Las Vegas before Pacquiao promoter Top Rank declared it dead on Wednesday.

Mayweather (40-0, 25 KOs) made his first public comments about the negotiations in a written statement that began with Mayweather saying he's "thoroughly disgusted" by Pacquiao's representatives' attempts to blame him for the collapse of what's likely to be the richest bout in boxing history.

"In my opinion it is Manny Pacquiao and his team who are denying the people a chance to see the biggest fight ever," Mayweather said. "I know the people will see through their smokes screens and lies. I am ready to fight and sign the contract. Manny needs to stop making his excuses, step up and fight."

The sides went to mediation on Tuesday in Santa Monica in an attempt to resolve the drug testing issues that are the only remaining conflicts in the negotiation. Mayweather's demands for frequent blood testing beyond the Nevada Athletic



Above: In this May 19, 2009, file photo, boxer Floyd Mayweather Jr. speaks during a news conference in New York to announce an upcoming fight, and below, In this Nov. 11, 2009, file photo, Manny Pacquiao, of the Philippines, speaks during a news conference at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.. Mayweather Jr. blamed Manny Pacquiao for the collapse of their prospective bout Thursday, Jan. 7, 2010, claiming the Filipino boxer refuses to accept a reasonable compromise on drug testing concerns.

Commission's requirements —and Pacquiao's reluctance to agree to those requests — have derailed the bout. Mayweather initially demanded repeated blood testing right up to the day of the fight, while

Pacquiao asked for a 30-day cutoff before the bout. Mayweather now claims he agreed to a 14-day cutoff compromise before the mediation session began, but Pacquiao still wouldn't accept those terms.

Schaefer, defamed him by falsely accusing him of using performance-enhancing drugs.

Top Rank boss Bob Arum was brutally frank about his former fighter on Wednesday, telling The Associated Press that Mayweather is "a psychological coward who doesn't want to fight anybody who has a chance of beating him."

After generating stellar pay-per-view revenue from their previous fights, both Pacquiao and Mayweather likely stood to make much more than \$25 million apiece from their welterweight bout. Mayweather returned to the ring after a 21-month absence in September with a victory over Juan Manuel Marquez, while Pacquiao (50-3-2, 38 KOs) pounded Miguel Cotto in November for his 13th straight victory since 2005.

Pacquiao is widely considered boxing's pound-for-pound champion, an unofficial title held by Mayweather before his aborted retirement. Their proposed fight was seen as the biggest moment in boxing since Mayweather's split-decision victory over Oscar De La Hoya in May 2007.

Daniel Weinstein, the retired federal judge who oversaw the mediation, also issued a statement on Thursday saying little about the actual discussions.

"In the end, the parties could not agree on a testing protocol acceptable to all," Weinstein's statement read.

Associated Press

"The truth is he just doesn't want to take the tests," Mayweather said.

Pacquiao has filed a lawsuit alleging Mayweather and most of his representatives, including Golden Boy Promotions CEO Richard

Queen Beatrix's 30th anniversary of her coronation

Majestic calendar by Aruban artist gustave Nouel will help unite Dutch kingdom



DEVENTER, Holland _ 2010 will be the 30th anniversary of the coronation of Queen Beatrix of Holland. In honor of this special occasion a day calendar will be printed and distributed throughout the Dutch kingdom.

Creator Gustave Nouel believes that the calendar appropriately titled, Rulers of Oranje, the royal family's title is Oranje van Nassau, unites the different Dutch territories with each other.

The calendar will be presented officially during the 'Rondom Oranje' exhibition which is in connection with the 30th anniversary of Beatrix's reign_ with the intent of creating a traveling exhibition throughout the Dutch kingdom.

Gustave Nouel is considered

a virtuoso artist working and living in Holland and Aruba. The artist was born in the tropics, and grew up on the little paradise Aruba; clear traces from the Caribbean can be found in most of his art work. His art is considered to have a creative bridge-function in general. In 1992 Nouel's JAZZ ART was presented at the WORLD EXPO SEVILLE in Spain. In the Dutch Paviljon, Nouel was the first and only artist painter from the tropical part of the Dutch Kingdom presenting his paintings at this World Expo Sevilla '92.

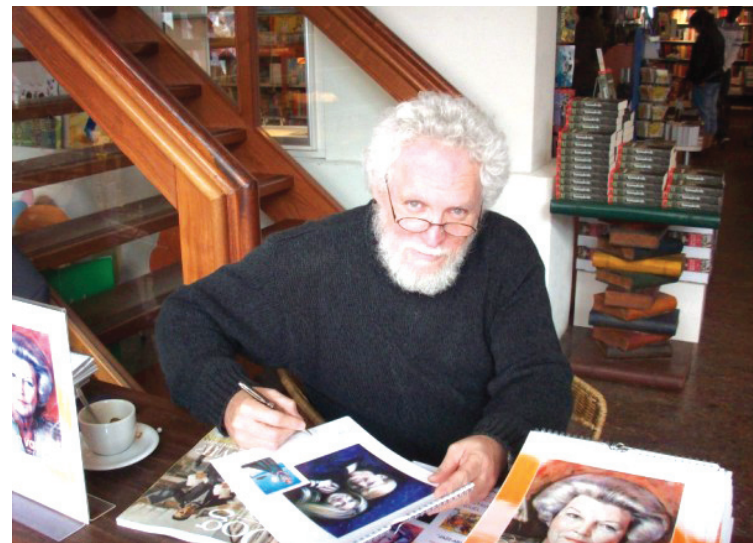
The 30th of december 2006, Gustave Nouel was recognized as most outstanding Aruban artist in the area of either art, plastic art, theater, music or literature,

by Caribbean Speed printers. At this moment in time Nouel is undoubtedly one of the most famous artist painters from Aruba; Nouel became Aruban artist of the year in 2006.

In 2006 Gustave Nouel also had the honor to design a special coin commemorating the anniversary of 30 years flag and anthem and 20 years Status Aparte of Aruba. This was the first coin ever minted in Aruba and also the first official coin in the native language Papiamentu. The first coin was symbolically minted by Queen Beatrix in Aruba at the Central Bank. Queen Beatrix presented these special coins at the Aruban Central Bank

Recognizing the artistic 'bridge function' of his Art between Aruba and the rest of the world? And his pioneer work helping develop and incent Art Tourism projects for Aruba, since 2002? Worldwide Nouel had more than 200 expositions, until now... In 2007 Nouel was surprised by a permanent place in the Aruban Hall of Fame at 'Paseo nos Herencia', amongst the (ten???) most famous persons from Aruban history!... An unexpected honor!

The mythical FATHER OF ARUBAN CULTURE, his 'uncle' Padu del Caribe, (family from his mother's side), was also one of the three living persons chosen by the Aruban Hall of Fame,



Gustave Nouel

amongst the ten 'most famous personalities/myths' (until that moment in time, 2007...) The third living person chosen, is the Aruban scientist Dr. Edward Cheung, actual developer and leader in the Hubble telescope space project from the NASA (USA)... The other seven chosen personalities undoubtedly are amongst the greatest and/or the most recognized and famous / mythical figures from Aruban history, at this moment in time! Five or six of the chosen have (one or more) official statues, somewhere in Aruba and/or in the exterior!... In august 2007, Nouel was one of the three artists invited by the Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Kingdom, for an exposition in their Gallery 'De Leeuw' in the Hague, related to the 'Kingdom Games'.

Dutch Ministry of Internal and Kingdom Affairs invited three artists for an exposition in their gallery in The Hague: GALERIE DE LEEUW in 2007. The intention of the governmental Art commission was to select and show the best Art the tropical part of the Kingdom can offer, at this moment in time, during these Kingdom Games...

Since 2008 Gustave Nouel is general adviser of ART PROMOTION

INTERNATIONAL a foundation that is developing international Art exchanges within the Dutch Kingdom, with China and between countries in the European Union, amongst others. In 2009 Nouel has been invited by SLEM to be part of an international avant-garde Art project in the prestigious yearly OEROL Art Festival on the Dutch island Terschelling.

Also the Dutch Oranje vereniging invited Nouel for an exposition of his paintings inspired by the House of Orange during the celebrations of the official Queens birthday around 30 of april 2009 in Groningen. The city where Nouel started his academic Art studies in Holland. In 2010 in april/may/june there is a great exposition planned in Groningen organized by the Oranje vereniging, that will have to travel internationally, starting in Berlin and London and the Tropical Dutch Kingdom... after Groningen. The House of Orange will open this special exposition in cooperation with top-artists, the Jan Menze van Diepen Stichting and other museums will be showing the former Old Dutch flag and other surprising things in an overwhelming presentation in which Nouel also has the honor to be a little part, with his paintings. □

At the Divi Aruba All Inclusive Resort

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PUNA BRAVO – Recently Pamela & Jim Minichiello, Deborah & Thomas DeSanti, Irene & Gregory McNamara y and their 2

daughters: Kaitlyn & Laurie McNamara were honored as distinguished guests . They’ve been visiting Aruba for 12 consecutive years.

At the same time, also Carol & John Colella, who have been coming back to our island for 10 years and Branda & Michael McDonell , 16 years,

were honored. The celebration took place at the Divi Aruba All Inclusive Resort. The couples visited different destinations around

the world but always considered Aruba as #1. They also said that Aruba was their second home and one of the reason that they return every year is the happy people, their hospitality and the security on the island. They recomend Aruba to many families and friends, who in the past years paid us a visit to get to know our small Paradise. The festivities were atended by Mr. Francis Ridderstap Mrs.. Vivian & Carissa, Divi Tamarijn representative and Rayon Koolman, representative of the Aruba Tourism Authority. □



Aqua Grill...“the hip restaurant that is heaven on earth for seafood lovers,” Fodor’s Travel Guide



Among the island’s many fine restaurants, Aqua Grill is the premier seafood sensation. Excitingly prepared in an open-view kitchen, fresh local catches join delicacies from waters abroad, including live Maine lobster, Norwegian salmon, sashimi tuna, and Alaskan king crab, along with a selection of non-seafood dishes. Aqua Grill’s award-winning chef offers a menu of classic and contemporary dishes. The fresh

seafood is prepared in a variety of regional styles, melding local island charm with the traditions of New England, the spices of Jamaica, the zesty flavors of Italy, the mystique of Indonesia, and beyond. In addition to a selection of authentic dishes, your seafood can also be prepared wood-grilled, broiled, poached, steamed, or pan-fried upon request. Complimenting the menu is the island’s largest

raw bar and a generous wine list of over one hundred selections. Set in a contemporary decor combining the traditions of a New England fish house with the ease and character of the Caribbean, Aqua Grill’s warm, island hospitality is the final ingredient to the complete dining experience on Aruba. Open nightly from 6pm to 11pm, 5:00pm to 11:00pm on Sunday. □

Venezuela Presents New Evidence of U.S. Violation of Venezuelan Airspace from Curacao

by James Suggett

ORANJESTAD - Following Holland's denial that its collaboration with the U.S. military in the Dutch Antilles threatens Venezuela, the Venezuelan government released new evidence that a U.S. war plane took off from Curacao and violated Venezuelan air space last year.

On Wednesday, the Caracas-based television station Telesur played a transcript of the radio conversation between the pilot of the U.S. plane and the control tower at Venezuela's Maiquetia airport, dated May 17th, 2009. The government denounced the incursion last year, but did not release the transcript at that time.

In the transcript, Venezuelan authorities asked the pilot to identify the airplane, its origin, and its intention upon entering Venezuelan airspace. The pilot confirmed that it was a U.S. military plane originating from Curacao that did not have permission to enter Venezuelan air space. The pilot said it had been an "error" and that the pilot "was not conscious of having flown into this air space."

Venezuelan Vice President and Defense Minister Ramon Carrizalez said the transcript is further evidence that the U.S. is planning an aggression against Venezuela through third party countries such as Curacao.

"On May 17th 2009 a U.S. war plane took off from Curacao, and violated our air space," Carrizalez said on Wednesday. Through this and similar operations in other countries, the U.S. is "creating the conditions to justify an aggression against our country," he said.

Carrizalez reiterated Venezuela's intention to promote peaceful international relations, but defend itself against foreign aggression. "No country should think it can attack our sovereignty in impunity, without receiving a decisive response," said the minister and vice president.

The release of the evidence came days after Holland denied that its military collaboration with the U.S. in its Caribbean territories is a

threat to Venezuela.

Dutch Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen declared last week that Venezuela's accusations are "unjust, erroneous, and fantastical," and said, "Holland does not permit the use of its territory for aggressions and it aspires to maintain good relations with Venezuela."

The minister reiterated previous statements that the U.S. military operations in the Dutch Antilles have gone on for several years, are unarmed and geared solely toward the fight against drug trafficking. Venezuela, however, has repeatedly expressed its suspicion of such claims. In a statement released on December 31st, 2009, the Venezuelan government said it "doubts that the facilities that the government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has put at the disposal of U.S. military personnel are used for the fight against drug trafficking."

The statement cited "the recurring excuse of drug trafficking" and "the United States' tradition of using third party countries to carry out spy

operations and launch military attacks" as part of the reason for its suspicion.

"Considering this, the national government demands that Dutch authorities honor their commitments to peace and international security, and abstain from attacking Venezuela, or offer its collaboration for such an end," the statement said.

Venezuela also accuses its neighbor, Colombia, of allowing the U.S. to conduct military operations that threaten Venezuela and other countries in the region. Last October, Colombia signed a military pact to allow the U.S. to expand its presence on seven Colombian bases, with diplomatic immunity for U.S. military personnel.

Colombian and U.S. officials, including U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, claimed the deal was merely an extension of the two countries' previous collaboration to fight drug trafficking and Colombian insurgents, and that it did not pose a threat to other countries.

However, official U.S. Air Force documents explicitly

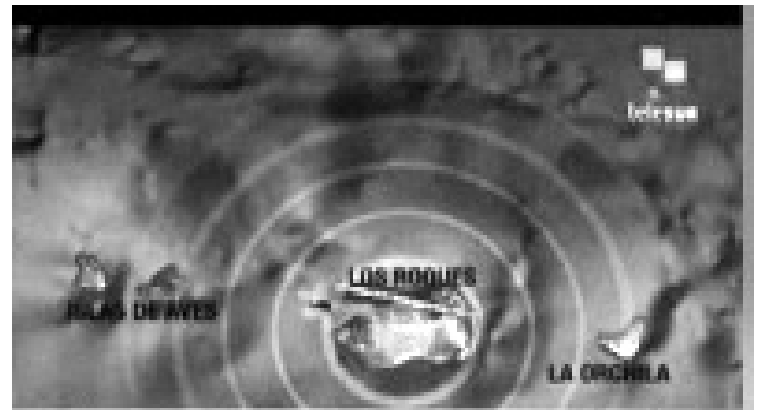


Image from Telesur's broadcast of the radio transcript of the May 2009 incursion on Wednesday

stated that the U.S. plans to construct new bases in Colombia, and that Colombia will be used as a launching pad for espionage and "full spectrum operations" across the entire South American continent. In public statements on Wednesday, former Venezuelan Defense Minister Orlando Maniglia said the U.S. operations in Curacao constitute "a new stage of aggression by the United States against Venezuela." He said the May 2009 incident was not an accident, because "the first thing a pilot makes clear are the limits to which he can fly."

Maniglia said the violation of Venezuelan air space was "a

premeditated calculation to test the reaction time of Venezuela and to see what there is on La Orchila," a Venezuelan coastal island used mainly by the Venezuelan military.

"Venezuela is respectful of the sovereignty of other countries... we are not seeking wars, and we never have," said Maniglia.

The Foreign Relations Committee of the Venezuelan National Assembly announced this week it will investigate the potential for an attack on Venezuela from Colombia, Curacao, or another foreign aggressor and prepare a document outlining potential responses, to be presented to the Assembly for ratification.

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First-time sightings in 2009 occurred in Costa Rica, Panama, Honduras and Aruba

Local divers trained to fight lionfish invasion



By Shurna Robbins
(Reuters) - More than 300 local scuba divers have been certified to catch red lionfish in a race to prevent the invasive and voracious species from consuming all the young and small fish on the Cayman Islands' famous corals reefs. DiveTech, a local diving operation, is running a boat each week to specifically catch the fish. Licensed fishermen also collect them on regular boat trips and dives from the shore. "We tell them, this is not a pleasure dive and they are hunting fish," said Simon Dixon, a lionfish hunter and scuba instructor for DiveTech. Divers typically work in teams

of two, using plastic nets, gloves and sometimes sticks to capture the fish, which has a large head with reddish-brown and white stripes and elongated, venomous spines. Without careful handling, it can cause a painful sting. "You have to be slow and careful and you have to treat them with respect. We have found they are quite clever. So if you move too quickly and scare the fish off, they will remember you and when you get close again they will retreat immediately," Mr Dixon said. Native to the Indian and Pacific oceans, red lionfish have no natural predators in the Caribbean and can

produce 30,000 eggs each month. Within five weeks they can consume all the juvenile and small fish on a reef, threatening the delicate ecosystem, said Mark Hixon, a marine biologist at Oregon State University. The species was first spotted in the Cayman Islands in early 2008 and quickly multiplied. Some 600 red lionfish were removed from Cayman waters in the last year, but the effort may not be enough to push back the invading fish, experts say. Bradley Johnson, a research officer with the Department of the Environment, said the department was receiving reports of more of the species in the waters and that their sizes also were increasing each month. "They have been caught in all habitats around the islands including dive sites down to 120 feet (36 metres), shallow waters and in the North Sound. We have also confirmed reports from as deep as 300 feet (91 metres)."

Mr Hixon, the Oregon State biologist, will travel to the Cayman Islands next month to scout reef sites and meet with government officials in preparation for a research project sponsored by the US National Science Foundation. "At present, the only solution to the invasion is for divers to remove lionfish from the

reefs," Mr Hixon said. "We are also working in the Pacific Ocean to study lionfish in their native range to determine why they are uncommon there relative to the Atlantic and Caribbean." Turning the red lionfish into a seafood dish, as has been done in the Bahamas, is another possible control method. Cooking destroys the toxins in the meat, which has been compared to grouper and snapper. "Lionfish are tasty so the government can help by encouraging a lionfish fishery. There are even expensive restaurants in the US serving lionfish as a top-dollar conservation dish," Mr Hixon said. Scuba divers are prohibited from catching fish on most reefs surrounding the Cayman Islands, but an exception has been made for the red lionfish because of the threat it poses to marine life. Environment Department staff

train and licence volunteer divers to safely catch the fish, which are then turned over to the government for collection of DNA and tracking. US government researchers believe the red lionfish was introduced into Florida waters during Hurricane Andrew in 1992 when an aquarium broke and at least six fish spilled into Miami's Biscayne Bay. In recent years, its population has exploded along the US eastern seaboard and the Atlantic islands of the Bahamas and Bermuda, and throughout the Caribbean into Puerto Rico, St Croix, Turks and Caicos, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Cuba and Belize. First-time sightings in 2009 occurred in Costa Rica, Panama, Honduras and Aruba, according to the US Geological Survey. DiveTech said it intends to continue running the lionfish boat trips as long as there is enough local interest to support it.



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Exit for the Antilles, but when?

The Dutch Antilles are set to disappear as a political entity, but before that happens, some obstacles need to be overcome.

In ten months the Netherlands Antilles will no longer exist. Currently the islands jointly enjoy special status as a separate nation under the Dutch crown, as does Aruba. As per October 10, Curacao and St. Martin will also become separate nations, while all other

Antilles

Most important obstacles to dismantling process

Aruba
180 sq km
105,000 inhabitants

Separate status – autonomous state within the kingdom since 1986

- Aruba's approval is necessary for changing the statute, the constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- Aruba will possibly reject parliamentary requirements, for example, regarding the law on homosexual marriage

Bonaire
288 sq km
13,000 inhabitants

Special municipality as inscribed in the Dutch constitution

- Large migration of Dutch citizens (retirees, civil servants and vacation-house owners) causes disquiet. Inhabitants feel like second-class citizens.
- Deputy prime minister Ank Bijleveld has cut off financial support as long as the island's administration refuses to discuss reforms. Rejection can create a two-year delay.

Curacao
444 sq km
140,000 inhabitants

Separate status – autonomous state within the kingdom, as of October 10, 2010

- A constitution for the new state of Curacao must be approved by a two-thirds majority in the island's council.
- New elections will be held together with scheduled parliamentary elections for Curacao and St Maarten in the summer of 2010. The constitution can then be adopted via a simple majority vote.
- Opposition parties will probably vote against it. Then the council will be disbanded and new elections will become necessary

St Maarten
34 sq km
40,000 inhabitants
(Dutch part)

Separate status – autonomous state within the kingdom as of October 10, 2010

- Parliamentary elections in the summer of 2010
- A 2007 report, commissioned by the Justice ministry, presents St Maarten as an island where organised crime is allowed to flourish
- The Dutch parliament has major objections to independence for St Maarten
- The liberal party, socialist party and Freedom party prefer St Maarten to be a special municipality
- There is no chance that St Maarten, originator of the dismantling process, will accept this idea

Saba
13 sq km
16,000 inhabitants

Special municipality, as inscribed in the Dutch constitution

St Eustatius
21 sq km
2,700 inhabitants

Special municipality, as inscribed in the Dutch constitution

Obstacles in the Netherlands

- Several opposition parties have objections against the agreements that have been made, including the restructuring of the Antillean public debt of 1.5 billion euros, in exchange for supervision of finance and justice
- The Dutch government must approve five laws that guide the government, police, ministry of public affairs and the council of justice in the new states and public bodies. These laws must also be dealt with by the Antillean states and the island councils of the five islands
- May 2011 also constitute a risk. The populist PVV, for instance, prefers ridding Netherlands of the Antilles, rather than maintain its overseas territories.
- On the deeply Christian islands there is strong opposition to gay marriage
- Dutch parliamentary elections of



Saba, the smallest island of the Netherlands Antilles.

Photo AP

islands will be absorbed into the Netherlands proper. However, there are many obstacles to be overcome before this deadline can be met, varying from the legal to the financial.

In addition, the Dutch parliament still needs to approve the reforms

and public referenda and scheduled elections in Bonaire and Curacao might get in the way. Deputy Minister Ank Bijleveld, responsible for the relationship with the Antilles, is sticking with the October 10 deadline for now. □



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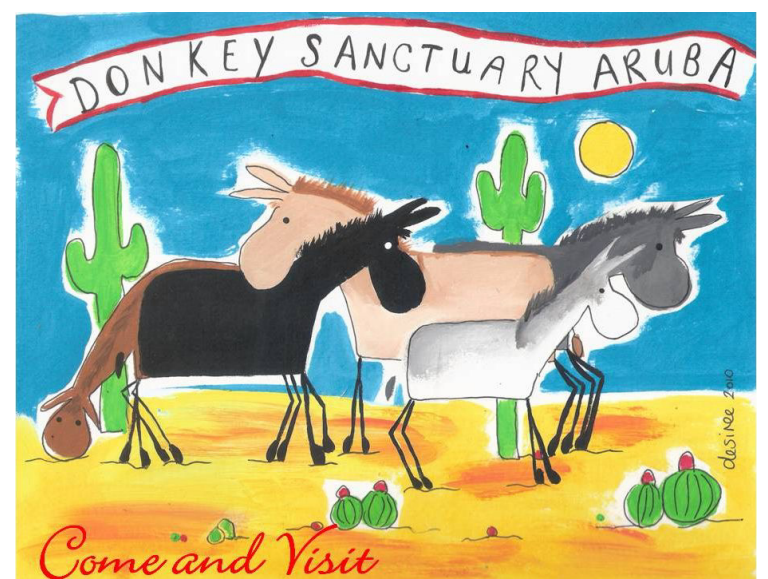
AAA announces participation with TOB in the torch parade

ORANJESTAD – Every year, as a Carnival incentive to its employees, AAA gives its employees the opportunity to participate in Aruba's Torch Parade. Each year, based on the demand by its employees, chooses which Carnival group AAA will join. Last year the choice was made for Champagne Carnival Group and this year, in the same process as last year, TOB Carnival Group has been chosen.

AAA regrets that at a local radio station it was

implied that for political reasons AAA decided to join TOB in participating in the Torch Parade. This was never the case or the intention. In the same way as last year Group Champagne was chosen and this year TOB, next year any of the other Carnival Groups can be chosen.

AAA regrets that the wrong conclusion has been drawn and assures that the choice for TOB is purely based on the demand by its employees, the same as the last years. □



Human hints

Physical Action 2 – The Attitude Behind The Action

Yesterday we discussed the importance of physical action. We talked about how it can get us out of depression and help us find a direction when there is no structure in our lives. Today we will talk about a subtle nuance that makes a huge difference to the outcome of your effort.

The energy of the outcome is defined by the energy behind the action. The attitude you embrace while conducting any physical activity, lays the foundation for the energy of the results of the activity.

As we have learned, the three dimensional result of our effort does not matter at all. Only the passion behind the pursuit matters. Your attitude is the energy behind your action, the type of energy you send into the world. With Life, you get what you give, so always be aware of your attitude.

My friends have a 4 year old named Jack. When Jack was faced with a task he didn't want to do, his parents suggested that he make the task into a game. Within a few days, Jack was making everything into a game, and he no longer resisted any chore. In fact, he became noticeably more care free and easy going. Everything he does now has a higher quality than before, and he has completely forgotten about his depression. Since concentration has become a

challenging game, Jack now focuses and remembers things far more easily than before.

Jack caught on quickly because as a child, he has not yet built his adult prison around himself, but adults can do the same thing with more effort. Making everything into a game will teach you the true nature of life. Life truly is a game. Only our emotions make life serious, and we're emotionally attached because the physical world seems so very real to us.

When life is a challenging game, your resistance is down. You don't have a bad attitude about what you're doing. Putting bad energy into a task makes your efforts ineffectual at best. Your emotions are emitted into all dimensions. Whatever you feel while you're taking physical action becomes grounded in the physical and becomes your foundation of self-expression. Inject good energy into your actions. Don't defeat your own efforts with a bad attitude.

You can shift your outlook in an instant, especially if you don't resist the change and allow yourself to effortlessly release your old patterns. Strong resistance is natural. A bad attitude can feel really good, and it knows how to keep itself alive within you. When we're in a bad mood, we naturally want to

stay there. This is where your personal inner strength is tested. The difficulty or ease lies in your ability to shift your perspective when you're emotionally attached.

Until Tomorrow...

Go to www.HumanHints.com to sign up to receive this column in your email each day.

~Quentin Danziger

Quentin has over 20 years experience balancing what we refer to as the Real World, with science and spirit. He has held positions of responsibility and authority, received a Bachelor of Science in Engineering Physics from Colorado School of Mines, and has also studied many avenues of alternative thought. HumanHints is the culmination of his knowledge, experience and practice. These free daily emails detail concrete, real-world techniques to consciously create any future you choose, while in the throes of daily life created by outdated modes of thought.

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SCHEDULE FOR WEEK OF JANUARI 7 - JANUARI 13

*matinee: saturday & sunday | late show: friday & saturday

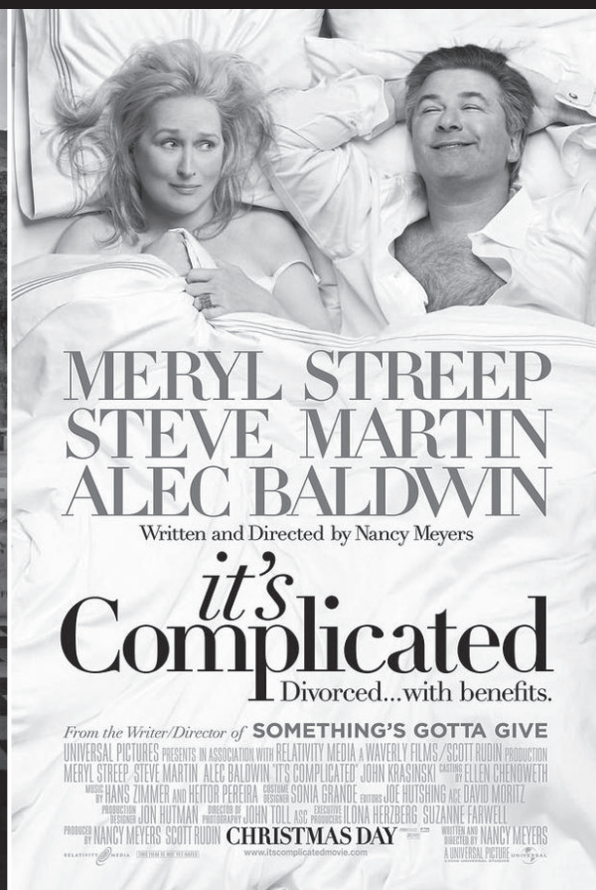
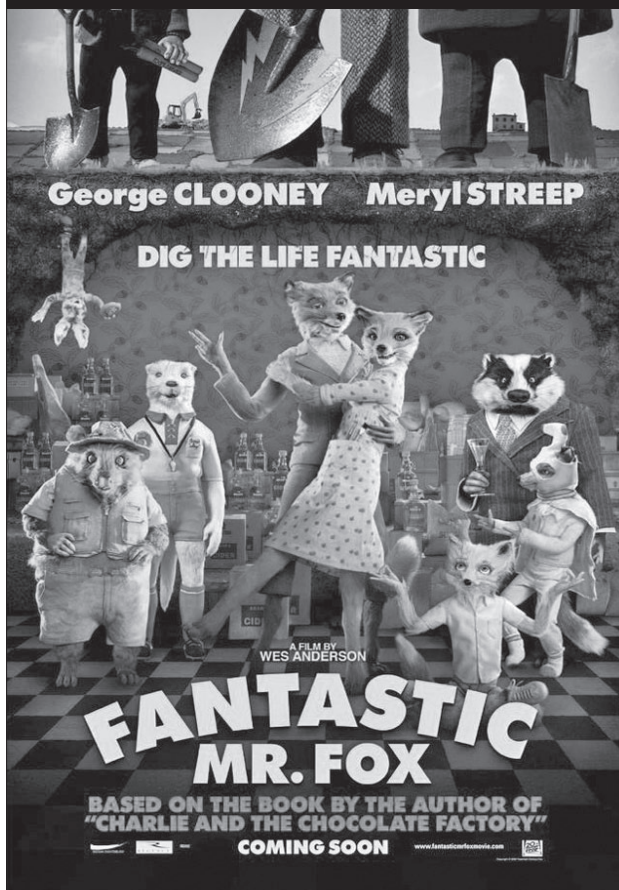
AT RENAISSANCE - ORANJESTAD

PG	FANTASTIC MR. FOX	daily: 12:00	4:00	6:00	late show: 12:00	NEW
G	THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG	daily: 12:15	4:45	7:00	late show: 12:30	
PG-13	THE BLIND SIDE	daily: 1:15	4:00	6:45	9:30	
PG	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS "THE SQUEAKQUEL"	daily: 12:00	4:00	6:00	late show: 12:00	
PG	OLD DOGS	daily: 4:15	6:15	8:15	10:15	
PG-13	2012	daily: 12:15	2:15	8:00	11:15	
R	NINJA ASSASSIN	daily: 12:15	2:15	9:15	11:30	
PG-13	AVATAR 3D	daily: 1:15	4:30	7:45	11:00	3D
R	THE MAN WHO STARE AT GOATS	daily: 12:00	2:00	8:00	10:15	

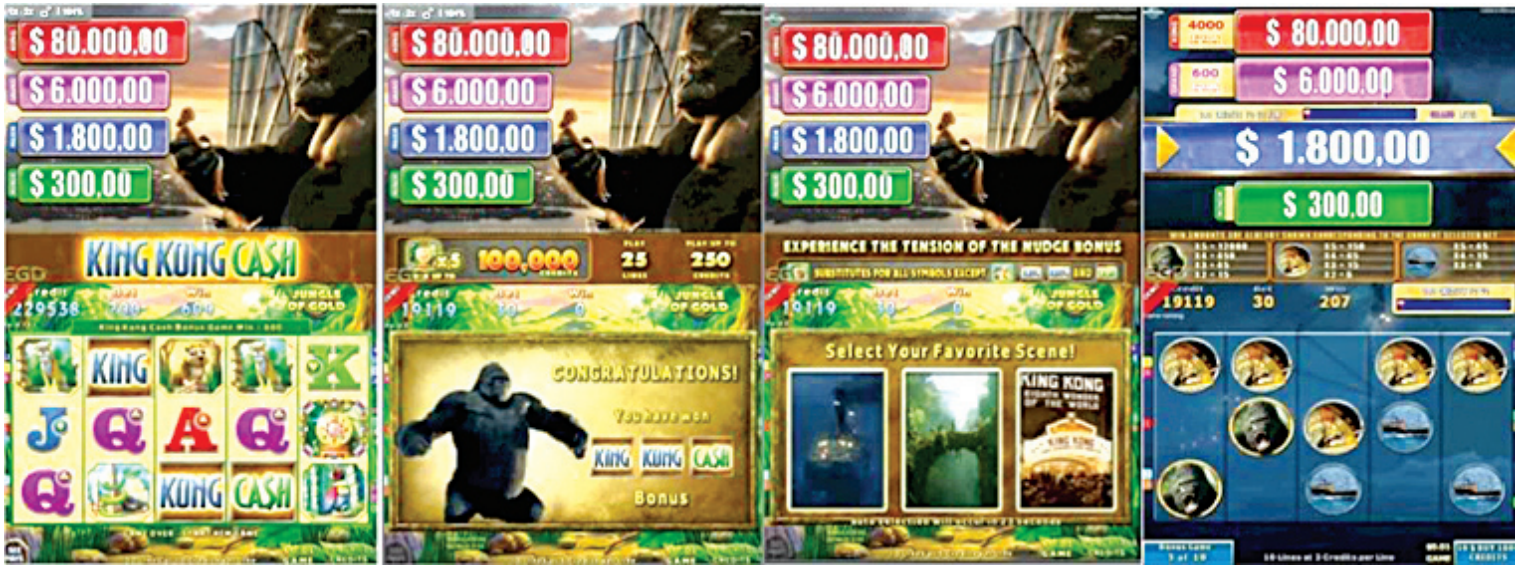
AT PASEO HERENCIA

R	IT'S COMPLICATED	daily: matinee:	6:45	9:15 late show:	11:45	NEW
PG-13	SHERLOCK HOLMES	daily: matinee:	5:30 2:30	8:30 late show:	11:30	
PG	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS "THE SQUEAKQUEL"	daily: matinee:	4:00 12:00	6:00 late show:		
G	THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG	daily: matinee:	4:30 12:00	late show:		
PG-13	2012	daily: matinee:		8:00 late show:	11:15	
PG-13	DID YOY HEAR ABOUT THE MORGANS	daily: matinee:	5:00 12:30	late show:		
PG-13	AVATAR 3D	daily: matinee:	4:45 1:30	8:00 late show:	11:15	
R	ARMORED	daily: matinee:		7:30 late show:	9:30 11:30	
PG-13	THE IMAGINARIUM OF DOCTOR PARNASSUS	daily: matinee:	6:00 12:45	8:45 late show:	11:30	

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How to Open the New Year in Great Style



PALM BEACH – Franco Posa from Toronto Canada won \$35,516.- when playing Caribbean Stud Poker at Cool Casino, Riu Palace Aruba Grand All Inclusive Resort, on New Year's day, January 1st, 2010, landing a coveted Royal Flush.

Caribbean Stud Poker

calls Aruba its home, as it was formulated here at the Holiday Inn Casino and has generated lots of interest from the moment it arrived on the gaming scene.

The exciting Caribbean Stud Poker table at Cool Casino always attracts a lot of attention, says Casino

Director Marc Charley, and on New Year's day it was especially generous to the 29-year old player, from Canada.

Cool Casino has another surprise prepared for visitors, as on January 11th it will be unveiling King Kong Cash, a bank of

slot machines by Atronic, nicknamed the Eight Wonder of the World.

Based on Universal Studio's monstrous movie, KING KONG CASH is the latest giant step in linked gaming from ATRONIC. Featuring a 4-level progressive jackpot and interactive bonus rounds, this game is guaranteed to be as thrilling as the movie! □



Read ARUBA TODAY every day

Live Music & Entertainment at Casa Tua Barcelona on Friday Night



ORANJESTAD - Enjoy your Paella and Sangria together with this fantastic live show! The downtown atmosphere is cool and relaxed with its in- and outside seating.

Our Flamenco Show will be extended this Holiday Season with the performance of Kavey Yarzagaray. This Flamenco guitar player will perform together with Angela Croes on Friday night. This is a show that shouldn't be missed.

The highlight at Casa Tua Barcelona is also the new lunch specials every weekday from Monday till Friday! A \$9.95 lunch special; Beef tenderloin with a red wine sauce or choose the Grouper Fillet for \$11.95. Both dishes include a soft drink. Fresh Fish lovers can treat the palate to the Whole Red Snapper, served with Rice and a salad.

All days of the week we serve Cold and Hot tapas as appetizers or the delicious Iberian Ham Pata



Negra which we import directly from Andalucía. As your main course you could choose our Paella, traditionally prepared on the spot by our chef! Combine this Spanish dish with our home-made sangria to complete your dinner.

Of course we saved the best for last as no one does an ending better than Casa Tua with their dreamy Tiramisu. If you're into something different we suggest tasting the Espresso Martini Cocktail as dessert, you won't be disappointed.

The best part about such a good ending is that it guarantees you'll be back for more...



Casa Tua Barcelona Downtown open from 11.30am to 10.30pm, Sunday from 5pm to 11pm tel. 588 5695. Casa Tua Palm Beach open from 5pm to 11pm, tel 586 8470

The year starts here: With new heights, new horizons and even new nations to explore, take the plunge into 2010

Adventure, culture or indulgence: whatever you seek in the coming year, let James Tennet, Ben Ross and Simon Calder inspire you.



New” countries are all the rage as the year turns, but for once we can report a genuinely new nation: on 10/10/10, the Dutch Antilles will be dissolved, and Curacao and Sint Maarten will become autonomous; two new nations for the list-tickers. Over the coming year there are plenty more inspirational opportunities for travellers – from a total eclipse in one of the world’s most beautiful islands, to the once-in-a-decade chance to attend the Oberammergau Passion Play. Your year of living dreamily starts here.

JANUARY

First, we take Berlin. The New Year’s Run in the German capital is the ideal way to fulfil your resolution to keep fit, with a 4km jog that starts at the Brandenburg Gate and leads you past many Berlin sights. You could usefully book a return trip for the end of the month, because on 26 January the Long Night of Museums takes place: more than 100 museums and cultural institutions are giving access to their exhibitions, collections and art objects throughout the night, enriched by a variety of events. There will be concerts, readings, theatricals and much more. You can travel by train from London to Berlin from as little as €49 each way. (bahn.de) All eyes will be on Dubai on 4 January for the official opening of the Burj Dubai, which has been unkindly described as the tallest white elephant in the world: 818m high, outdoing the nearest completed competitor as tallest building (Taipei 101) by 60 per cent. At the heart of the Burj Dubai tower will be the world’s first Armani hotel, scheduled to open in early 2010. (burjdubai.com) The first significant astronomical event of the year takes place on 15 January, when an annular eclipse occurs over Africa, Asia and the Indian Ocean. An annular eclipse is one in which the Moon does not completely obscure the Sun and a thin ring of sunlight remains visible. Annular eclipses occur when the Moon is at its farthest point from the Earth. It can be seen in Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Maldives, south-eastern India, Sri Lanka, Burma, and central China, and will last between eight and 11 minutes, depending on location. This duration will not be exceeded again until the year 3043. The ideal place to be is the Maldives (where it will last 10 minutes and 45 seconds). First Choice has a week all-inclusive at the Gasfinolhu Island Resort on North Male Atoll with return flights from London Gatwick, leaving on 10 January, for £1,251. (firstchoice.co.uk). And Astro Expeditions is running a special one-week trip to Kenya, taking in an eight-minute viewing and time in the Masai Mara game reserve for £1,395 including flights, accommodation and most meals. (astro-expeditions.com/kenya).

FEBRUARY

As Simon O’Hagan wrote in The Independent Traveller earlier this month, Venice is at its most atmospheric in winter, when gentle mist from the canals softens the focus and lifts the spirits. In addition, air fares and hotel rates tumble – though during the Venice Carnival, 6-16 February, the crowds arrive for processions, masquerades and music in the canals, squares and palaces of this ancient city. Carnival adopts a new theme each year: in 2010 the theme is “Sensation”. Inspired by the senses, this edition invites visitors to discover, see, feel, touch, smell and taste the city and its six districts. Great Rail Journeys offers a 10-day tour (by train, of course) from London, taking in the Carnival, and paying a visit to beautiful Lake Bled in Slovenia, before returning to St Pancras: £1,600 including hotel accommodation, all breakfasts

and eight dinners. (greatrail.com) The German version of carnival will overturn your preconceptions about the national psyche. From 11-17 February the Cologne Carnival is one of the biggest street parties in Europe, with more than one million people descending on the city for a week of parades and partying. Lufthansa offers returns from Heathrow starting at £100. (lufthansa.com) The big sporting event of the year is the World Cup in South Africa (see June), but a creditable Silver goes to the Winter Olympics, 12-28 February, in Vancouver and Whistler in Southern British Columbia. Sportsworld is offering a variety of packages in Vancouver during the Winter Olympics, from £1,335 for five nights, including airport transfers, accommodation and breakfast. Tickets for specific events at the games can be requested at the time of booking. (vancouver2010.sportsworld.co.uk). Through ebookers.com, you can fly from London to Vancouver and back on United Airlines (via LA) from £600.

MARCH

The closest European capital accessible by rail, Brussels, is the venue for “Museum Night Fever” on 6 March. This is an evening of music, fashion, and guided workshop visits that lasts until 3am. Buy a Eurostar ticket from London St Pancras and you can combine it with a side-trip to Antwerp, Bruges, Liège or any other station in Belgium. Fares from £59 return. (eurostar.co.uk) On St Patrick’s Day, 17 March, go west – but fly over Ireland to the city where the saint has been celebrated with a parade since 1762; New York’s St Patrick’s Day Parade is the oldest in the world. There are no floats or vehicles but more than 150,000 marchers, bands and dancers, dressed in Irish finery traverse the parade route and several hundred thousand more people line the streets to watch the spectacle. Expedia has a week in the five-star standard Peninsula Hotel during St Patrick’s week for £1,129, including BA flights from Heathrow. (expedia.co.uk) In Japan, the flowering of the country’s official tree – the delicate cherry blossoms – is awaited with great excitement. Japanese television crews track the flowering of the blossom as it moves its way northwards up the country. With picnics and plenty of alcohol, this is one of the biggest and most public social outings in the country. If you want to be part of this magical event, be warned it can be an inexact science: the official flowering period is between March and April. Opodo has return flights in late March from Heathrow to Tokyo (via Helsinki) on Finnair from £500 return. (opodo.co.uk)

APRIL

The big cruise news in the spring is the 12 April launch of Azura, P&O Cruises’ latest vessel. The maiden voyage from Southampton is a 16-night tour, taking in Corfu, Dubrovnik, Venice and Gibraltar. Iglu Cruise is currently offering the trip for £1,560pp. (iglucruise.com) On 26 April, the inaugural short-break cruise on the new Celebrity Eclipse departs from Southampton to Le Havre; from £399. (celebritycruises.co.uk) One of the most sacred of all Hindu pilgrimages, the Kumbha Mela – which occurs four times every 12 years and rotates among four locations – is on the calendar at Haridwar, Uttar Pradesh. Millions attend each day, taking a ritual bath in the Ganges. The whole event begins on 14 January and lasts until the end of April, but the main royal bath takes place on 14 April. Abercrombie & Kent can provide a week at “Ananda in the Himalayas”, with full board and a night in Delhi, for £2,595. (abercrombiekent.co.uk, anandaspa.com) Also starting on 14 April, Martin Randall Travel has a new six-day tour, with a thematic focus on Spanish opera: performances at the Liceu, and at Calatrava’s stunning new opera house in Valencia interspersed with talks on music by the cultural historian Daniel Snowman, and wine tastings introduced by the Catalan wine expert Linda Hanks. The price of £2,580 includes BA return flights from Heathrow, two meals a day, first-class rail travel between Barcelona and Valencia, wine tastings, admission fees and lectures. (martinrandall.com)

MAY

Shanghai hosts Expo 2010. This spectacle will spread over both sides of the Huangpu river. The 12 pavilion groups will showcase countries from around the world; the UK is planning a huge “light box” for its

pavilion. With a slogan of “Better City, Better Life”, Shanghai hopes to make the Expo “a powerful and lasting example of sustainable and harmonious urban living”. It runs from 1 May to 31 October. For an extravagant short break, Bales’ four-day Shanghai Expo Weekend includes a full day at the Expo, as well as a day exploring the sights of Shanghai. The price of £899 includes flights, transfers (including a ride aboard the world’s fastest train, the 350km/h Maglev train to and from Shanghai airport), accommodation, breakfast, Expo day ticket, and a half-day Shanghai sightseeing tour. May also marks the beginning of the main Mediterranean package holiday season: after 2009’s dismal summer, the big tour operators are expecting a lot of interest in short-haul destinations, and a continued resurgence in the former Yugoslavia. On 5 May, Thomson starts trips to Montenegro, which won independence from Serbia only in 2006. Travel in mid-May, when prices are lowest, and you can get a fortnight full board for £590. (thomson.co.uk) You can explore the high peaks and rugged terrain in the Montenegrin mountains, and the scores of beachfront fishing villages scattered along the coast. Far further east, the Bun Bang Fai Rocket Festival takes place 5-9 May in Thailand’s Yasothon Province. For the duration of the festival, teams launch their massive rockets into the skies in an effort to reach the greatest height. V C The festival originated as a ceremony to encourage auspicious circumstances for the rice-planting season. The rockets were thought to “stimulate” the rain clouds and encourage the rain gods to provide a plentiful watering for the newly planted crops. Overnight buses from Bangkok-Yasothon depart from Bangkok’s Mochit Bus Terminal every day. Alternatively, visitors can take a train or plane to Ubon Ratchathani, then complete the last four hours by bus. Gulf Air has return flights in early May from Heathrow to Bangkok (via Bahrain) from £380. (gulfair.com) A once-in-a-decade opportunity begins on 15 May, through to 3 October: the Oberammergau Passion Plays. Staged every 10 years in the picturesque German town of Oberammergau, they are a series of powerful and inspirational performances that pay tribute to the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. About half the inhabitants of Oberammergau are expected to take part: over 2,000 villagers will bring the story of Jesus to life in a five-hour epic that attracts hundreds of thousands of spectators from around the world. Riviera Travel has regular one-week tours, taking in Salzburg, Lake Constance and Innsbruck, including a category 1 ticket for the passion play, four-star half-board accommodation, city tours, all transfers, and return flights from the UK, from £1,299. rivieratravel.co.uk

JUNE

As the World Cup gets under way, this is a good time to escape to the great outdoors – demand, prices and crowds will shrink while the football is on. A 17-day holiday in the Russian Far-East, including a 12-night voyage to the spectacular landscape of Kamchatka, the volcanic Kuril Islands and the remote Commander Islands, costs £5,995 including flights and full-board and accommodation, 20 June to 5 July. For something much closer to home and substantially easier on the pocket, spend three days exploring the botanical attractions on the Hampshire Downs: £265pp including meals and accommodation. (naturetrek.co.uk) Or distract yourself with a luxury tour from Journeys of Distinction: 18-days, exploring Canada, taking in Niagara Falls and the Rockies – departing on 11 June (the same date World Cup 2010 kicks off). The price of £3,585 includes Air Canada flights from Heathrow, some meals and all accommodation. (jod.



uk.com)

On 24 June, the French celebrate the shortest night of the year with a huge firework display held right in the middle of Paris. The “Midsummer Fireworks” is a free event, with thousands of pyrotechnics launched from the top of Ile Saint-Louis while spectators observe from the Quai Saint-Bernard. Eurostar has returns to Paris from £59. (eurostar.co.uk)

JULY

By now the sun may be well and truly shining in the UK, but on 11 July it gets awfully dark over parts of the southern hemisphere. Next year’s solar eclipse is remarkable because there are very few accessible observation points from which the total eclipse will be visible. Destinations include the remote Cook Islands and French Polynesia. However, the path of the Moon’s shadow – with totality lasting an impressive four minutes 39 seconds – passes directly over the tiny Easter Island, 3,800km off the coast of Chile. Explore (explore.co.uk) offers a 15-day Easter Island and Chilean highlights tour for £4,845, departing 5 July, including flights from Heathrow, accommodation (some camping) and most meals. Closer to home, the 2010 Tour de France begins its 2,000 mile-long test of endurance in Rotterdam in the Netherlands on 3 July, then moves on to Belgium before continuing through France and coming to an exhausted halt in Paris on 25 July. You can catch the Rotterdam prologue over a long weekend in the city. Expedia (expedia.co.uk) offers three nights’ B&B in the centrally located four-star Eden Savoy Hotel, plus return VLM flights from London City departing 2 July for £558.75 per person. Still in the sporting arena, from 15-18 July, the British Open Championship returns to St Andrews for the 150th anniversary of the oldest major championship in professional golf. See the official Open Golf Hospitality site for hospitality packages (opengolfofficialhospitality.com). On 15 July the International Carthage festival is held in the Tunisian town of Carthage, 10 miles from the capital, Tunis. The country’s biggest arts event mixes a programme of local and international music, and performances take place in Carthage’s Roman amphitheatre. Opodo (opodo.co.uk) is offering a week’s B&B accommodation in the four-star Hotel Diplomat in Tunis in July 2010 for around £420 per person, including return BA flights from Gatwick. The festival runs until 15 September. July is also the month of the Great Australian Outback Cattle Drive, recreating the pioneering cattle drives along the 515km Oodnadatta Track in South Australia. The drive is led by some of Australia’s most experienced drovers and usually involves around 500 head of cattle and 120 horses. Departing on 30 July (and until 29 August), Bales is offering a 10-day holiday that includes five days on horseback on the Great Australian Outback Cattle Drive. The trip also includes two nights in Adelaide and four nights in Sydney. It costs £3,625, including flights, transfers, accommodation, most meals, horse riding equipment, and sightseeing. (balesworldwide.com) And 20 July is the 200th anniversary of Colombia’s declaration of independence from Spain; see The Independent Traveller next Saturday for inspiration.

AUGUST

The 40th anniversary of the Isle of Wight pop festival (the huge 1970 event, not the various pretenders before and since) is bound to cause some stirrings in the collective musical loins of middle-aged folk. Those who have outlived Jimi Hendrix, Keith Moon and Jim Morrison – all of whom featured at the greatest line-up ever assembled – can make a pilgrimage to Freshwater, where the bands played on, and on, and on, for five days over the August Bank Holiday in 1970. And you can even get there by Greyhound: buses from Victoria in London (bookable at greyhounduk.com, from £2.50 return). These terminate at the Southampton terminus of Red Funnel Ferries (01703 220099), the company which transported many of the half-million fans over to Cowes. Stay at the Albion Hotel in Freshwater Bay (01983 755 755; sandringhamhotel.co.uk), close to the festival site. The hotel offers free ferry crossings when you book a holiday through it. If you have a more youthful approach to celebrations, do your bit to



alleviate Common Agricultural Policy surpluses by putting your worst clothes and heading for La Tomatina in the town of Buñol, close to Valencia, on 25 August. This is the annual tomato-throwing festival where thousands of people from around the world descend on the town to throw 100 tons of over-ripe tomatoes at each other. Ryanair has return flights that week from Stansted to Valencia starting from around £122. (ryanair.com) Pillow Tours and PP Travel both offer three-day tours taking in the festival and other local attractions including transfers to and from Valencia and two nights’ accommodation, with breakfast, for around £150. (pillow.co.uk, pptravel.com)

SEPTEMBER

The end of Ramadan is expected to be 9 September: a splendid time to visit the Islamic world, for both the festivities that surround the end of the month of fasting, and the fact that the summer heat has eased in the Holy Land, notably Jordan and Syria. These countries, and in particular the cities of Petra and Palmyra, are featured on an Exodus tour departing on 25 September for 16 nights, for £1,459 including flights, local transportation, a guide, and accommodation. (exodus.co.uk) Scotland is the most beautiful country in the world when the sun shines, and September can enjoy some splendid weather. (Up until the autumnal equinox on 21 September, you can also feel smug about the fact that Scotland enjoys more daylight than any other part of the UK.) The optimum way to carve a course through the Great Glen from Inverness to Fort William is aboard Fingal of Caledonia (01397 772167; fingal-cruising.co.uk), a Flemish barge converted into a floating multi-activity centre. From 11 September, a six-day “Music on a Classic Cruise” itinerary features a guest musician; £725 per person. By 24 September, the last celebrating football fan should have returned from South Africa – which means that it’s a good week to head for the seaside town of Hermanus, about an hour from Cape Town, which comes alive for the Whale Festival. The festival is organised to coincide with the arrival of the whales in Walker Bay, and the cliffs surrounding the bay provide spectacular views of the cheerful cetaceans. Etihad is offering return flights from Heathrow to Cape Town via Abu Dhabi in late September 2010 from £600. (etihadairways.com)

OCTOBER

The first day of the month marks the 50th anniversary of Nigeria’s independence from Britain, with a carnival planned in the nation’s capital, Lagos. Virgin Atlantic (virgin-atlantic.com) and British Airways (ba.com) both operate direct services from Heathrow to Lagos, with flights in late September selling for around £520 (BA) and £565 (Virgin Atlantic) at the moment. Meanwhile, the 2010 Commonwealth Games run from 3-14 October in Delhi. Jet Airways (jetairways.com) is offering direct flights from Heathrow to Delhi in early October 2010 from £400 per person. The big news on 10 October is the emergence of two “new” countries, when the Dutch Antilles are dissolved and Curacao and Sint Maarten become autonomous. Neighbouring Bonaire, Saba, and Sint Eustatius, on the other hand, will become a direct part of the Netherlands as special municipalities. UK holidaymakers to the region tend to make for Aruba, once also part of the Dutch Antilles. Thomson (thomson.co.uk) offers seven-day packages in October 2010 from £1,054 per person.

Continued on Page B12

Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution find themselves surrounded



In this photo released by Miraflores Press Office, Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, gestures during his weekly radio and television show "Hello President" in Caracas, Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009. Chavez claims an unmanned U.S. spy plane recently violated the Venezuelan airspace and he's ordered his military to shoot down such aircraft if it happens to fly again over his country's territory.

(AP Photo/Miraflores Press Office)

ORANJESTAD - Venezuela Revolution find themselves thirteen US military bases in and the Bolivarian surrounded by no less than Colombia, Panama, Aruba,

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and Curacao, as well as the aircraft carriers and warships of the 4th Fleet. President Obama seems to have given the Pentagon a free hand. Would the people of the world allow a new crime against democracy to be carried out in Latin America? asks Ignacio Ramonet, editor of Le Monde Diplomatique in Spanish.

In this article, the author writes that Chavez' assumption of power in Venezuela on February 2, 1999, coincided with a military development that was traumatic for the US: the closure later that year of its primary military base in the region, Howard Air Force Base in Panama. As a replacement, the Pentagon chose four strategically-situated locations to control the area.

From the very beginning their main objectives were monitoring Venezuela and destabilising the Bolivarian

Revolution.

In Latin America, the redeployment of bases made it possible for the one in Manta, Ecuador, to collaborate on the failed coup against Chavez on April 11, 2002.

Since then, a media campaign directed by Washington has been spreading false information about the presumed presence in that country of cells of organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah, and even Al Qaeda, which, it is claimed, "have training camps on the island of Margarita."

In August 2009, the Pentagon announced that it will open seven new military bases in Colombia. And in October, the conservative president of Panama, Ricardo Martinelli, admitted that he granted the US use of four new military bases. □



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Court bans fraudulent prison bookkeeper from civil service

~ Says earlier sentence was too mild ~

PHILIPSBURG--The Court of Appeal has banned a fraudulent prison bookkeeper from the civil service for five years.

Ereline E. Royer-Presentation was sentenced Wednesday to eighteen months, seventeen of which were suspended, with three years' probation, and a Naf. 30,000 fine.

Judges E.M. van der Bunt, J. de Boer, and F.J.P. Lock of the Joint Court of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba found it proven that the Pointe Blanche prison bookkeeper had embezzled Naf. 107,000 from PCM Foundation, money that belonged to prison inmates. The woman had withdrawn money from the fund between January 2006 and May 2007, the judges stated. The Court of Appeal agreed with Solicitor-General Ton van der Schans that the sentence of 18 months suspended with three years' probation and 240 hours of community service imposed by the Court of First Instance in May 2009 was too mild. During the hearing of the appeal on December 16, 2009, the Solicitor-General had asked for 30 months, 10 of which were to be suspended, and a fine. The Court of Appeal judges stated that Royer had discredited her job as a civil servant while working at the inmates' care department. In sentencing, the court took into account that Royer had overspent her stay in police detention by 16 days, which was good for a two-months reduction of her sentence.

Cruise numbers down some, rebound expected this year

POINTE BLANCHE--St. Maarten ended 2009 with 9.7 per cent fewer cruise passengers than the previous year, but a rebound in numbers has been forecast, based on an estimated twenty per cent increase in arrivals in 2010-2011.

A total of 1,215,146 cruise passengers visited St. Maarten in the past 12 months, 130,666 below 2008 figures, according to information provided by St. Maarten Harbour Group of Companies.

Despite the decrease, which has been largely blamed on the wounded global economy, causing travellers to watching their pennies, the actual numbers surpassed projections for 2009 by 5.6 per cent, or 64,288 cruise passengers.

Every month except January, February and April saw declines. The highest number of passenger arrivals occurred in January, with 195,440 passengers, compared to 174,774 in 2008.

February's arrivals clocked in second at 170,828, compared to 162,491 for the same month in 2008.

The third-highest-grossing month was December with 168,201 arrivals, but this number was a far cry from the 2008 figure for the corresponding month: 190,154.

There were 500 cruise calls for 2009, 18 fewer calls than in the

previous year. Those calls made some cruise history however, as the world's largest ship Oasis of the Seas began her weekly stops here on December 9.

The outlook for this year does not look so glum, with cruise giant Carnival Corporation and its main rival Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines reporting steady bookings.

Also boosting the outlook is Harbour Affairs Commissioner Theo Heyliger's announcement in October that the island expects to round off this year with some 1.5 million cruise passengers as a result of a change in the marketing approach of the Port of St. Maarten.

Princess Cruise Lines will increase calls to 50 in 2010, compared with 32 in 2009, and will continue with 50 calls in 2011. Holland America Lines (HAL) will increase its number of visits in 2010 to 28, and this number will jump to 35 in 2011. HAL made 23 calls in 2009.

Calls by Carnival Cruise Lines will jump from 95 recorded last year to 112 in 2010, "which means that there will be a vessel year-round, and more calls during the off-season, which is very important for businesses on the island, especially those in Philipsburg," Heyliger had stated.

Police cadets were not on duty during holiday

PHILIPSBURG--Some twenty St. Maarten police cadets were not part of the visible police presence during the just-concluded holiday season. The cadets were home for the Christmas break but were not assisting the police as Leader of Government Commissioner William Marlin stated in his New Year's address.

Police spokesperson Inspector Ricardo Henson, when asked for an overview of the cadets' performance, told this newspaper that they were "simply home on vacation" and were not performing any duties.

Asked about the contradiction, Marlin said that there was an agreement with Justice Minister Magali Jacoba to have the cadets remain in uniform during their holidays to provide much needed assistance to the island's understaffed police force.

However, the cadets did not complete an exam and were not allowed to do work training with the police, but this information had never been communicated to the Island Government, Marlin contended, adding that his speech had been recorded before Christmas.

"There was a very high police presence during the holidays – even some top-ranking officers were on the streets, so I thought they were here but only found out today [Wednesday] from the Lt. Governor that this did not happen," Marlin said.

The agreement to have the cadets in uniform to assist the police was intended to be part of a great boost for the force during the busy holiday season, but none of this additional manpower promised by the Central Government ever arrived.

Another part of this boost was to have been the loan of some members of the Curaçao Zero Tolerance Team to St. Maarten, leading up to the holiday rush. These detectives also never came.

Now, according to Marlin, some 15 detectives as well as technical support from the Netherlands are slated to arrive on the island on January 15 with the aim of taking a bite out of crime. The team will mainly focus on investigation of unsolved crimes and open cases.

In December alone, three people were murdered.

The latest killing happened two days before the start of the New when Eric Yuan Sam, Manager of Afoo Supermarket in Dutch Quarter and a father of four was shot at lose range during an armed robbery at the supermarket. A pregnant woman was also wounded.

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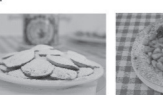
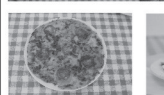
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The year starts here:

Continued from Pages B8 & 9

From 8-23 October, head for the Melbourne International Arts Festival, an event which attracts over half a million visitors annually. See melbournefestival.com.au for more details.

Alternatively, the Queen Elizabeth begins scheduled service on 12 October. The new cruise ship from Cunard (cunard.co.uk) weighs in at over 92,000 tons and can carry 2,092 passengers. It took just 29 minutes for the maiden voyage to sell out, but the “Mediterranean Premiere” 14-night cruise (taking in Barcelona, Monte Carlo, Naples and Gibraltar) embarks on 25 October, with balcony rooms still available from £2,231 per person. Flying in to Ecuador gets easier this month, not because of new flight connections from the UK, but because a new international airport is scheduled to open in the capital, Quito. Once the new airport opens its doors, the current airfield will be converted into a park. (quiport.com)

NOVEMBER

The 11th month is the ideal time for a long-haul trip, and they don't come more distant than New Zealand. Besides low fares (no school holidays to drive up demand) and uncrowded roads, you can explore North and South Islands in the benign, blossoming southern-hemisphere spring. But don't just sit there: be one of the first to ride the Waikato River Trail, which is expected to be completed in the central North Island. It is part of the exciting the NZ Cycle Trail project, championed by the prime minister, John Key. (www.bit.ly/NZBikeTrail)

Mexico will be in rebellious mood all year; in September it celebrates the 200th anniversary of independence from Spain, and 20 November will mark the 100th anniversary of its Revolution. This was when Francisco “Pancho” Villa and Pascual Orozco led the first insurrectionist attack. Expect new exhibits of pre-Hispanic, Spanish, modern and contemporary Mexican art, historic routes, shows, publications and seminars. The entire year has been proclaimed by President Felipe Caldero*as the “Year of the Nation”. BA has direct return flights from Heathrow to Mexico City in November 2010 from £666 (ba.com). Journey Latin America can put together various tailor-made Mexican itineraries to coincide with these dates. (journeylatinamerica.co.uk) Further south, First Choice is starting package holidays to Costa Rica this month; you can stay for two weeks, all inclusive, at the five-star Paradisus Playa Conchal resort from £1,876 including flights from Gatwick. (firstchoice.co.uk)

Fine Art Travel has a new five-day trip to Florence departing 5 November, when the city will be empty and alluring. It is tied in with the recent publication of a new guide book to Renaissance Florence by Charles Fitzroy – who will be accompanying the tour. The price is £2,400 including most meals, five-star accommodation, transfers, lectures and entry fees - but not flights. (finearttravel.co.uk) Closer to home, Guy Fawkes is commemorated on 6-7 at Leeds Castle, when 7,000 people are expected to gather for two afternoons of entertainment in the castle grounds followed by a firework finale. The nearest train station is Bearsted, which has frequent Southeastern services from London, and then a coach shuttle service connects to the castle. (leeds-castle.com)

DECEMBER

Will Christmas 2010 be the first “festation” for many beleaguered Brits? The travel chaos in the build up to 25 December this year may have been partly caused by the wrong kind of snow, but it was intensified by it being the wrong time of year to travel: demand for flights, trains, ferries and package holidays goes sky-high, and any kind of disruption can soon turn from ripples into tidal waves of travel turmoil. Indeed, the only sensible time to travel in December is during the first couple of weeks: the highest of peak seasons is always preceded by the lowest of lows. This is the ideal time to fly down to Rio, where it is early summer; take off on 30 November, so you are ready for the beach on the first day of December, and you pay less than £700 from London via Paris. (airfrance.co.uk)

Alternatively stay to the last day of the year. Various curious seaside rituals on 31 January are dedicated to Iemanja – Goddess of the Sea and Carnal Pleasure – during the day, with wild parties on the beaches accompanied by samba bands at night. Packages from around £1,400 including flights from London are available through brazilbookers.com.

With capacity still constrained by the beleaguered airlines, if you plan a long-haul trip next Christmas you should book flights as soon as they become available in mid-January. And then keep your fingers crossed. □

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2BR	WK 1/17	PLATINUM	O.S. \$ 30.000
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2BR	WK 51/17	PLATINUM	O.V. \$ 24.000
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STU	WK 5	ROOM 2214	P.V. \$ 16.000
STU	WK 4	ROOM 2108	P.V. \$ 14.000
1BR	WK 4	ROOM 2105	P.V. \$ 17.000
1BR	WK 4/9	ROOM 4226	P.V. \$ 14.000 PW
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2BR	WK 4	ROOM 129	O.F. \$ 22.000
1BR	WK 1	ROOM 227	O.F. \$ 17.000
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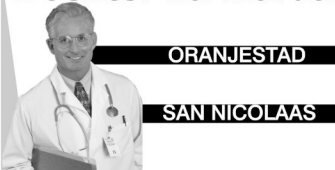
DIVI VILLAGE			
STU	WK 3	ROOM 8303	P.V. \$ 6.000
STU	WK 3	ROOM 5508	P.V. \$ 6.000
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Partido oficialista Perú busca reducir a mitad mandato Congreso

LIMA (Reuters) - El partido gobernante de Perú presentó el jueves un proyecto de ley para reducir a la mitad, a 2,5 años, el mandato de los legisladores en el Congreso, a poco más de un año de las elecciones generales en el país andino. La iniciativa fue presentada por la presidenta de la Comisión de Constitución del Congreso, la oficialista Mercedes Cabanillas, para que sea debatida desde marzo, cuando el Legislativo reinicie el período de su sesión anual. El proyecto implica un cambio en la Constitución, que estipula cinco años para el mandato de los 120 parlamentarios, y por lo tanto su modificación debe ser aprobada en dos períodos legislativos consecutivos. Cada año cuenta con dos períodos legislativos, uno por semestre.

Perú celebrará elecciones presidenciales y para los miembros del Congreso en el primer semestre del 2011. “Se busca una renovación total, en la práctica, a la mitad del período en el Congreso”, dijo Cabanillas, presidenta también de la dirección política del Partido Aprista Peruano. La propuesta del partido oficialista va más allá de una iniciativa lanzada el año pasado por el Gobierno del presidente Alan García, que busca renovar la mitad del Congreso unicameral peruano cada dos años y medio. Para este último plan, muy criticado por la oposición, partidarios de García -cuya aprobación a su gestión es de sólo un 30 por ciento- intentan recopilar las 1,5 millones de firmas necesarias para realizar una consulta popular que de visto bueno a ese proyecto. Las fuerzas políticas en el Congreso peruano están divididas y el partido oficialista ha tenido que recibir el apoyo de otros bloques para sacar adelante sus proyectos. El APRA tiene 36 legisladores, el opositor Partido Nacionalista 26 y el grupo del ex presidente Alberto Fujimori



Foto de archivo de congresistas peruanos junto con miembros del parlamento andino y europeo antes de una asamblea en el Congreso en Lima, abr 29 2008. REUTERS/Enrique Castro-Mendivil (PERU)

13 representantes, entre los bloques más importantes en el parlamento peruano. Daniel Abugattás, legislador nacionalista, dijo que su partido evaluará la propuesta

aunque “de manera personal yo estaría de acuerdo con reducir el período parlamentario”. Carlos Bruce, legislador del partido del ex presidente Alejandro Toledo, se mostró

en desacuerdo con el plan del partido oficialista. “Lo que me llama la atención es que el partido de Gobierno, en su último año, está presentando reformas de gran

transcendencia”, afirmó. “Esto huele a un aprovechamiento político”, agregó.

El Congreso es la institución más desprestigiada por los peruanos, con un 80 por ciento de desaprobación, debido a los constantes escándalos por mala conducta y casos de corrupción entre sus miembros, según sondeos de opinión. El presidente García, que no puede postular a una reelección, fue elegido a mediados del 2006 para un período de cinco años, junto con los actuales miembros del Congreso. □

Venezuela cerró el 2009 con inflación de 25,1%

CARACAS (AP) - El índice nacional de precios concluyó en el 2009 en 25,1%, lo que convirtió a Venezuela en el país con la mayor tasa de inflación de la región por cuarto año consecutivo, según informó el jueves el Banco Central.

La aceleración de los precios en Venezuela ocurre en medio de una contracción económica lo que ha hecho estimar a los analistas que el país entró en un proceso de “estanflación”. La inflación en diciembre se ubicó en 1,7%, lo que representó una leve desaceleración respecto al mes anterior cuando se reportó una tasa de 1,9%.

A pesar del crecimiento más lento que tuvo la inflación en diciembre, la fuerte presión que sufrieron los precios durante el resto del año hizo que se alcanzara una tasa acumulada de 25,1%, que aunque es menor en 5,8 puntos respecto al 2008 está muy por encima de las tasas de los años 2006 y 2007 que fueron de 17% y 22,5%. Para el 2008 la inflación acumulada fue de 30,9%. □

Colombia decreta desastre natural por incendios forestales

BOGOTÁ (AP) - El gobierno declaró el jueves como desastre natural la ola de incendios forestales que desde hace una semana afecta a varias regiones del país y anunció una serie de medidas para paliar la emergencia.

La viceministra de Ambiente, Claudia Mora informó a la prensa que “ya está evaluada la situación y las recomendaciones que nosotros enviamos es que se declare el desastre” natural.

Agregó que las medidas a tomar van desde el cierre de parques nacionales naturales, hasta la prohibición definitiva del uso de la pólvora. “Estas medidas serían en 11 departamentos, 77 municipios, en un poco más de 2.000 hectáreas que son las que nos tienen preocupados”, advirtió. Pidió a la comunidad internacional apoyo con equipos terrestres.

La viceministra dijo que la declaratoria de desastre natural le permite al gobierno desembolsar con mayor facilidad dineros oficiales y conseguir, sin mayores trámites, equipos de emergencia para

hacerles frente a los incendios.

“El informe que tengo hasta el momento dice que más de 2.200 hectáreas han sido consumidas por el fuego, especialmente en los departamentos de Cundinamarca, Boyacá y en el Cañón de las Hermosas (Tolima)”, dijo en entrevista telefónica Carlos Costa, ministro del Medio Ambiente.

En tanto, el capitán Daniel Castaño, coordinador nacional de bomberos, explicó vía telefónica que también hay incendios en los departamentos de Meta, Valle del Cauca y Antioquia, “pero la situación más delicada es en Cundinamarca”, en cuya capital, Bogotá, se presentan varios incendios desde el domingo pasado.

Según Castaño, los incendios son “provocados por manos criminales en un 90%” y el resto por acción natural de la sequía a la que está enfrentada Colombia desde mediados de 2009, cuando se inició el llamado fenómeno tropical de El Niño, que calienta las aguas del Océano Pacífico. □

Presidenta Argentina echa por decreto a jefe de Banco Central

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - La presidenta Cristina Fernández echó el jueves al jefe del Banco Central acusándolo de mala conducta por demorar un traspaso de reservas para pagar deuda, agudizando una crisis política que puede golpear la aspiración de Argentina de recuperar la confianza inversora. El removido titular del Banco Central argentino, Martín Redrado, quien resistió durante dos días un pedido de renuncia del Gobierno, será reemplazado interinamente por su vicepresidente Miguel Angel Pesce, dijo la presidenta Fernández. Fue “una medida que me hubiera gustado no tener que tomar”, dijo la mandataria a periodistas. “Realmente esperábamos un ejercicio de responsabilidad (de Redrado), pero ya está, se tomó la decisión porque el Banco Central tiene que seguir funcionando”, expresó. El riesgo país saltó 25 puntos porcentuales a 681 unidades tras conocerse la decisión

presidencial, alcanzando su nivel más alto desde el 21 de diciembre, según el indicador que elabora la banca JP Morgan. Posteriormente retrocedió a 668 puntos. Fernández emitió un decreto con carácter de urgente para despedir a Redrado, un economista con prestigio internacional, a pesar de que el Congreso es el único organismo con potestad para remover a un titular del Banco Central. Una fuente de la entidad rectora del sistema financiero dijo a Reuters que Redrado analizaba junto con juristas del banco los pasos a seguir. La decisión de Fernández expuso nuevamente su ruda forma de gobernar, sucedánea de la de su marido y antecesor, Néstor Kirchner. Según abogados podría provocar un conflicto de poderes, ya que legisladores amenazan con denunciarla judicialmente por entender que atropelló la potestad del Congreso. La mandataria también ordenó denunciar judicialmente a

Redrado por “incumplimiento de los deberes de funcionario público”. La disputa se produce a pocos días de que el país lance un canje de bonos incumplidos por 20.000 millones de dólares que podría reabrir la puerta para que Argentina vuelva a obtener financiación externa después de ocho años de aislamiento. El ministro Jefe de Gabinete, Aníbal Fernández, dijo al canal de noticias C5N que Redrado deberá abandonar su cargo “mañana a primerísima hora”. Simultáneamente, el departamento jurídico de la autoridad monetaria señaló que recomendaba a su presidente contar con la anuencia del Congreso antes de desprenderse de las reservas internacionales que la presidenta ordenó en diciembre transferir al Ministerio de Economía. La presidenta Fernández acusó a Redrado de demorar la transferencia de 6.569 millones de dólares de las reservas a un fondo creado



El titular del Banco Central argentino, Martín Redrado, dijo el jueves que seguirá trabajando en la implementación de un fondo para pagar deuda con reservas, un día después que la presidenta Cristina Fernández pidiera su renuncia desatando una crisis de poderes. REUTERS/Jose Miguel Gomez/archivo

para pagar deuda pública. juristas afirmaron que es La carta orgánica del Banco Central indica que el presidente debe ser cesado con acuerdo de que el Congreso estará del Congreso, pero algunos inactivo hasta febrero. □

Paraguay:

Lugo al quirófano por próstata

ASUNCION (AP) - El presidente Fernando Lugo será operado el viernes en un hospital privado por un “problema leve de próstata”, según anunció el jueves el ministro de Comunicación Augusto Dos Santos.

El mandatario y ex obispo católico, de 58 años de edad, fue sometido el martes último a un chequeo médico pero su médico personal Nelson Martínez había informado sólo de “una inspección rutinaria de sus várices porque se pasa mucho tiempo de pie o sentado. Lo ideal es que camine mucho”. Sin embargo, Dos Santos aclaró que durante la inspección médica “se detectó el problema leve, propio de la edad...”. □

Procuraduría Colombia pide revocar licitación de tercer canal privado

BOGOTA (Reuters) - La Procuraduría General de Colombia pidió el jueves a la Comisión Nacional de Televisión detener la licitación de un tercer canal privado, con el argumento de que existen fallas jurídicas y dudas técnicas que la hacen inviable. La solicitud del organismo de control se produjo después que el grupo español de medios Prisa y un consorcio liderado por el magnate venezolano Gustavo Cisneros anunciaron en diciembre su retiro de la puja, a la que acusaron de tener fallas e inconsistencias en el proceso. En el proceso se mantiene el Grupo Editorial Planeta. “Se ha sugerido, se ha recomendado a la Comisión Nacional de Televisión (CNTV) revocar el acto de apertura de la licitación tendiente a adjudicar el tercer canal”, dijo a periodistas la procuradora delegada para la vigilancia de la función pública, María Eugenia Carreño. “Eso significa para la Procuraduría que el proceso de licitación ha fenecido, no puede

continuar, debe revocarse el acto de apertura y volverse a iniciar”, dijo la funcionaria. Carreño aseguró que al haber un solo oferente el valor base de unos 35 millones de dólares no se va a incrementar lo que puede originar un detrimento patrimonial para el Estado. La procuraduría también hizo cuestionamientos técnicos relacionados con la red y la frecuencia en la que operaría el nuevo canal. Por su parte la comisionada del ente regulador de la televisión Zulma Casas pidió suspender el proceso con el argumento de que ha perdido credibilidad y no se puede adjudicar a un único proponente. En la actualidad, en Colombia operan los canales privados Caracol y RCN, además de tres públicos de cobertura nacional, ocho regionales y uno local. De inmediato no se produjo ninguna reacción de la CNTV a la solicitud de la procuraduría, pero el organismo regulador de la televisión en Colombia insiste en que el proceso ha sido transparente, serio y responsable. □

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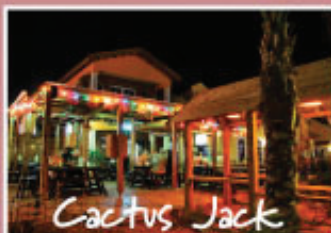


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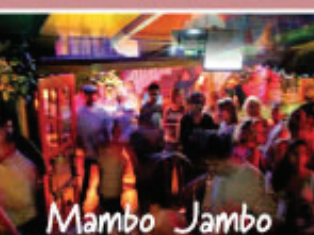
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